



# Using the buttonhole needling technique

Information for patients of the Kent Kidney Care Centre who are currently receiving haemodialysis

## What is buttonhole needling? Why is it different?

A technique known as buttonhole needling (or constant site) describes a method of inserting a dialysis needle used for haemodialysis into your arm via your fistula but with a blunt needle instead of the standard sharp ended needle.

Standard sharp needles are placed differently and each method is dependent on the length of your fistula.



## What is the benefit of using this type of needle?

Using blunt needles allows the needle to be placed easier and some people have reported less discomfort.

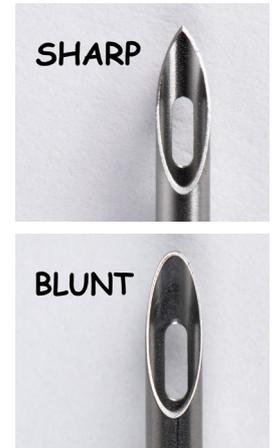


## How is it different?

Two specific areas of the fistula are used and the dialysis nurses in your unit will help with this selection. If you are already self-caring and inserting your own needles you can work with the staff to find suitable sites.

The buttonhole method uses the same hole, direction, and angle each time. Standard **sharp needles** are used for at least four to 12 sessions to create a track.

Using the same sites enables scarred tissue to form underneath the skin around your chosen sites. Strict guidelines are followed to minimise infection, as the scab is removed each time. Once the track is established **blunt needles** can be introduced. The insertion of a blunt needle uses a different method to that of a sharp needle and the nurses will show you this difference.



## Is this a new technique?

No - this technique has been used in dialysis units throughout Europe for more than 30 years. The UK introduced this in 2006, and it is widely used in dialysis units across the country.

## Who benefits from this method?

This method is ideal for people whose fistulas are quite short in length or for those of you wishing to learn how to insert their own needles.

## Can everyone use buttonhole?

No, all patients are risk assessed to make sure there are no problems, such as skin or heart conditions.

People involved with self-care are offered this method of needle insertion, as long as they remain safe to do so and follow the procedure correctly. This is important for your safety.

## What about people whose fistulas are new?

The staff will discuss your dialysis plan with you during the first few weeks.

To begin with, two standard sharp needles need to be successfully placed for at least six sessions allowing for an assessment of your fistula. The assessment includes:

- examining the length of your fistula
- space available to place the needles
- flows from your fistula; and
- ease of placing the needles.

## What about infection?

The buttonhole technique does carry an increased risk of infection compared to the normal technique used. If you suspect you may have an infection (red, swollen, painful skin on or near your fistula), **do not** insert your needles - call the dialysis nurse immediately for urgent advice.

However, we do make sure our procedures minimise the risk of infection and the benefits of this technique far out way the potential risk.

For those patients who have confirmed staph (staphylococcus) aureus on their skin you will be provided with octenisan gel to apply to the needling sites at the end of each of your haemodialysis sessions. Please make sure this gel remains in place for a minimum of six hours, as it is essential to minimise the risk of localised skin infections. This is a preventative treatment and is therefore for continuous use after each dialysis session. Please make sure you have a constant supply and that it is used for every session.

## What if I have any concerns or questions?

If you are concerned please speak to a member of staff.

If at any time you think your fistula may be infected, please contact your local renal unit or **Marlowe Ward on 01227 78 31 00** immediately.

**This leaflet has been produced with and for patients**

If you would like this information in **another language, audio, Braille, Easy Read, or large print** please ask a member of staff. You can ask someone to contact us on your behalf.

**Any complaints, comments, concerns, or compliments** please speak to your doctor or nurse, or contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 01227 78 31 45, or email [ekh-tr.pals@nhs.net](mailto:ekh-tr.pals@nhs.net)

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