

About fistula scanning

What is a fistula?

Before starting your regular haemodialysis sessions, you need to have a site on your body where blood can be removed and returned during dialysis. An arterial venous fistula (AVF) is designed for this - it is created by connecting an artery directly to a vein, usually in the forearm. Connecting the artery to the vein causes more blood to flow into the vein. As a result, the vein grows larger and stronger, making repeated needle insertions easier.

Why is the scan important?

The scan is a means of checking bloodflow in the fistula. It detects significant narrowings in the artery or vein. If the fistula is not functioning properly, dialysis will not work as well, and the AVF may be at risk of blocking.

Where do I go?

The Vascular Studies Unit on the 9th floor in the Department of Surgery.

Who will I see?

You will be seen by a clinical vascular scientist, who will perform and interpret your ultrasound scan.

What do I need to do to prepare for the test?

No preparation is required for the test.

What does the test involve?

The test takes about 30 minutes, and is safe, painless and non-invasive. You may need to remove some clothing so the scientist can assess your arm. You sit on a couch and some cold gel is applied to the area where your fistula is. The scientist assesses the area and notes any narrowings or blockages within the vessels.

What happens next?

The clinical scientist writes a report of the scan result and informs the doctor who requested it. The clinical scientist can comment on the findings, and you will be able to discuss the results more fully with the doctor at your next out-patient appointment.

For more information, contact the vascular unit on 020 7830 2862 during office hours.

If you would like a large print or audio version of this information, please ask a member of staff.