

About pre-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 do I need to have a scan before creating a fistula?

It is important to ensure that all the arm and neck arteries and veins are functioning adequately otherwise the fistula may fail.

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 performs and interprets 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 20 minutes, and is safe, painless and non-invasive. You may need to remove some clothing so that the clinical scientist can scan easily. The scientist puts some cold gel on your neck and arm and then investigates the blood flow, noting any narrowings or blockages in the arteries or veins. Measurements of the sizes of the arteries and veins in the arm will be taken and recorded.

What happens next?

The clinical scientist writes a report of the scan results 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.