

## Protect Your Veins for the Future!

If your kidneys do stop working, you will need to have dialysis or a transplant to live. It is important to **protect the veins** in your arm so that a **fistula** can be made to provide access to your blood to do these treatments.

A fistula is created by having a surgery to connect an artery and a vein under the skin in your arm. It is known as a “**lifeline**” for a dialysis patient.

If you have CKD, we encourage you to see a vascular surgeon and plan for a fistula placement, **6-12 months before** your doctor thinks you will need treatment. This allows time for the fistula to mature, or be ready to be used.

Placing an IV or having your blood drawn can damage your veins, making it difficult to create a workable fistula.

- **Do not let ANYONE take blood or use the veins for an IV in the protected arm, except in an emergency.**
- Always **use your hands** first for vein access or blood draws.
- Inform ALL health care providers of your needs.

**You may NEVER need to have a fistula placed** if your kidney function does not get down to a dangerous level. But **if you do** need treatment, you will have a better chance of having a good access, if you **Save the Veins!**