

Taking Care of our Veins: Our Lifeline

The following document was prepared by Lisa Sackuvich, RN, BSN, CRNI. Lisa is the founder of ARJ Infusion Services and also serves on our Board of Directors.

Our veins really are our lifeline, particularly for people with chronic diseases that require routine blood draws for lab tests or intravenous medications on an ongoing basis. We need to protect and keep them healthy. Whenever you have blood drawn or have intravenous (IV) catheter removed you need to hold pressure to the site for at least 2 – 5 minutes. Hold pressure long enough to stop bleeding from the vein. Internally the vein needs to seal and several minutes of holding pressure to the site will allow it to heal properly. Medications such as, aspirin, ibuprofen, blood thinners and prednisone sometimes prolong bleeding and the vein will need pressure held longer to promote healing and not leave a bruise. Allowing the vein to heal also prevents the buildup of calcium around the outside of the vein, which can cause scar tissue. Take care of your veins they are your lifeline.

In general if we are drinking the required amount of water and fluid daily those veins just pop up, so drink plenty of fluids. The recommended daily water intake for adults is 64 ounces a day for normal body function. The vitamins and minerals in milk not only build healthy bones and teeth, they contribute to building strong veins as well. Applying a heating pad, taking a warm bath, massaging the arm stimulates warmth and relaxation which in turn causes veins to dilate. When veins are dilated they are easier to see and this makes catheter insertion easier. Vein training is important, so that the same vein is not repeatedly used for every infusion. Utilizing squeeze balls, grippers, and simple arm exercises can help train the veins in the arm to fill completely. Working the veins in the arm 2 or 3 times a week, by squeezing a ball 5 times can improve the strength of the veins in the arms and hands.