



# A guide to...

## Urethral Catheter

### *Patient Information*

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## Advice for patients discharged with new catheter

You may be apprehensive about having a catheter, but support is available. How long you will need the catheter varies depending on your underlying medical condition. It ranges from a few days to a permanent solution.

Proper catheter care is essential to prevent infections and ensure comfort, including regular cleaning, handling and monitoring for potential issues. Understanding how to manage your catheter effectively is crucial for maintaining health and well-being during its use.

### What is a urethral catheter?

A urethral catheter is a small, flexible tube inserted through the urethra into your bladder to drain urine. To stop the catheter falling out a small balloon at the tip of the catheter is inflated (blown up) once it is inside your bladder. Your urine will drain into a collection bag/valve. One of your nurses will show how to care for your catheter before discharge and if you are bed bound follow up will be done by the district nurses in the community.



### How long will I need a catheter?

The length of time you will need a catheter will depend on the reason it was inserted. Some people need a catheter only for few days or weeks, others may need a permanent catheter. Your doctor or nurse will discuss this with you prior to discharge.

### Looking after your catheter and drainage bags /valve

#### Remember to wash your hands before and after handling your catheter, drainage bag or valve

You should have a daily bath or shower if possible, using unperfumed soap or shower gel and water to clean the catheter area or wash the area every day using a clean cloth.

- Men should wash their penis well, particularly under the foreskin.
- Women should wash the catheter area first and then wash around their back passage.
- You should then dry the area thoroughly. Never use talcum powder or creams as these could cause irritation.
- You are advised to wash the catheter away from the urethra so as not to encourage germs to enter the body and cause infection.

### **Emptying your leg bag (Leg bag for daytime)**

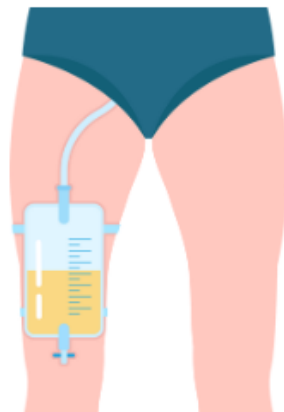
- Remember to wash your hands before and after emptying your leg bag.
- Empty the bag by opening the tap at the bottom to allow the urine to drain into the toilet. A container may be used if you find difficulty to walk to the toilet
- Empty your drainage bag at regular intervals to avoid it becoming too full and heavy. A full drainage bag will cause strain on the straps and will be uncomfortable.
- Do not forget to close the tap once the bag has been emptied.

### **Changing your leg bag**

- Remember to wash your hands before and after emptying your leg bag. Poor hand washing is a major cause of catheter infections.
- Remove the cap from your new bag.
- Empty your old leg bag.
- Remove your old bag, firmly attach a new leg bag to the end of your catheter.
- Secure the new leg bag in place.
- Empty catheter by releasing valve and close, wash hands remove valve and replace with a new one.
- Your leg bag/valve should be changed once a week.
- Put the cap on the end of your old bag.

### **Attaching the overnight drainage bag to leg bag**

- When you go to bed, you will need to attach a larger bag. The night bag should either be attached to the leg bag or to the catheter valve.
- Loosen the leg bag straps for comfort. The leg bag can be attached to your right or left leg depending on which side is most comfortable for you.
- Always keep the bag lower than your bladder to allow good drainage of urine.
- Support the overnight bag on the stand.
- Night bag can be attached to catheter valve, when the night bag is removed don't forget to close valve.



## Removing your overnight drainage bag:

- Overnight bag should be removed in the morning (Usually single use or reusable for up to a week)
- Close the tap on the leg bag.
- Never leave the drainage bag touching the floor as it may pick up bacteria
- Disconnect the overnight bag and drain contents into the toilet or container.

## Using a catheter valve (Flip flow valve)

Some people prefer to use a catheter valve rather than a leg drain bag. The discharge nurse will show you the different products available and discuss these with you.

- Open the valve whenever you feel the need to pass urine, before going to bed at night and first thing in the morning. Overnight you may wish to attach the valve to an overnight bag to prevent the need for you to get up to drain the catheter. This can be done by attaching an overnight bag to the valve and then opening the valve to allow free drainage.
- If you do not feel a sensation to pass urine, you should empty catheter valve every three to four hours
- Close the valve (in the morning), before disconnecting the overnight drainage bag.
- Change your valve once a week. This can be done by opening the old valve first to drain your bladder, removing the valve and putting in a new one.



## Helping yourselves with catheter

- To make sure your catheter drains well, you need to drink at least 1.5 litres (three to four pints) of fluid each day.
- Make sure you stay well hydrated - you should aim to drink enough fluids so your urine is pale colour
- You should avoid becoming constipated, so eat plenty of fresh fruit, vegetables, whole grain and high-fibre diet.

## **Common catheter problems and troubleshooting techniques**

### **If urine is not draining:**

- Make sure there are no kinks in the drainage tube, which may stop drainage.
- Check tubing and ensure drainage bag is below the level of bladder
- Make sure you are drinking enough fluids.

### **If urine is leaking around your catheter check:**

- There are no kinks in the drainage tube.
- The drainage bag is below the level of your bladder.
- The drainage bag is well supported
- Increase fluid intake and dietary intake to resolve constipation.

### **Pain or discomfort in your lower abdomen:**

- Check if the urine is draining from your catheter.
- Raise the drainage bag above the level of the bladder for 10-15 seconds only.

### **Haematuria (blood in the urine)**

- Increase the fluid intake
- Seek medical advice if haematuria persists.

### **When should I ask for further advice?**

Contact your district nurse or out of hours GP service, if:

- Your urine has not drained for three to four hours and have long-term pain.
- There is blood in your urine, and it does not clear after drinking extra fluids.
- Your urine is cloudy, smelly or feels as if it is burning, and does not improve after drinking extra fluids.
- Urine keeps leaking around your catheter.
- If you develop severe or ongoing bladder spasms (Like stomach cramps)
- You have symptoms of catheter associated urinary tract infections such as lower abdominal pain, high temperature, cloudy urine, burning when passing urine, unpleasant smelling urine or blood in your urine, unusual confusion, contact your GP immediately to determine whether you should have antibiotic treatment for a suspected urine infection.
- If your catheter falls out, contact your district nurse.

## Securing device

The G-strap prevents the catheter from being pulled. It has a Velcro strap around the catheter and your leg to hold the catheter firmly in position.



## Trial without Catheter (TWOC)

A TWOC involves having your catheter removed by a trained member of staff to see if you can urinate and empty your bladder completely. If it's determined that the catheter needs to be removed, the nurses will refer you to the appropriate services.

## Supplies

The nurses will give you a catheter home care packs with a seven-day supply of products including leg and night bags. For further supplies your GP can prescribe catheter bags, etc or you can register with the home delivery system that will continue to supply with future products.

## Disposal

Waste catheters and drainage bags can be disposed of by placing in a carrier bag and then put in the household waste collection (unless you are advised otherwise).

## Follow up

A referral will be made from the hospital to community services for ongoing management and follow up.

You can contact District Nurses on: 0300 0200 656

Please don't hesitate to ask your doctor, nurse or healthcare assistant if you have any questions regarding your catheter care.

## Further information

The Bladder & Bowel Community [website](#) has further information.