

# Catheter Care

## Information and Advice for Patients with a Urethral Catheter

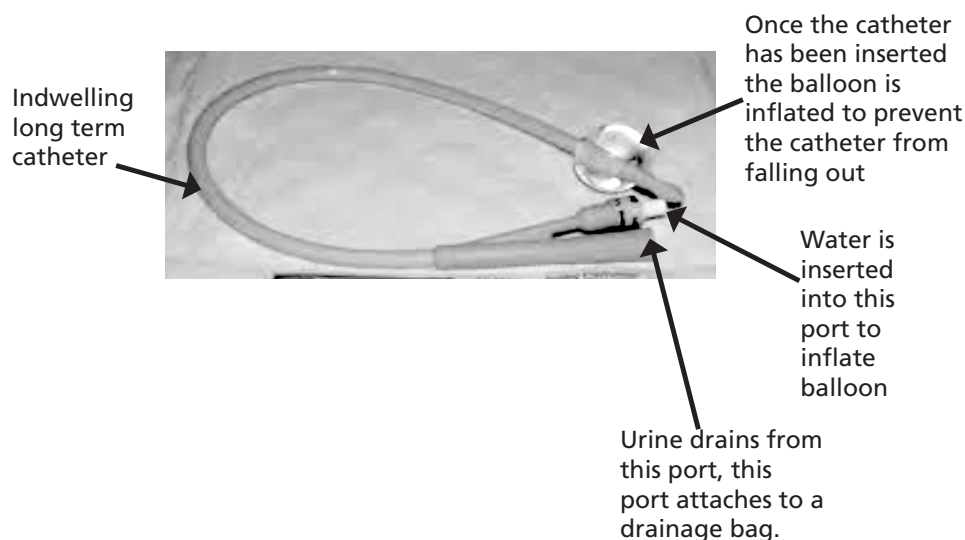
Urology

### Who is this information for?

A catheter has been passed through the urethra (water pipe) into your bladder to drain urine. This leaflet has been written to help you to look after your catheter and manage any problems that may occur. It should be used with verbal information given by your nurse or doctor and support from your district nurse or Continence Advisor.

### What is a catheter and how is it inserted?

An indwelling catheter is a soft hollow tube, which is passed into the bladder to drain urine. A catheter is inserted by a trained nurse or doctor under sterile conditions using a local anaesthetic gel. Once inserted, the catheter is kept in place by a small balloon which is inflated inside the bladder which prevents it from falling out. The catheter drains urine from the bladder into a leg bag which is supported at thigh or calf level. Leg bags are discreet enough to be worn under clothing. A larger drainage bag called a night bag can be used to provide more drainage capacity overnight and this should be placed on a stand.



**The prevention of infection is a major priority in all healthcare and everyone has a part to play.**

- Please decontaminate your hands frequently for 20 seconds using soap and water or alcohol gel if available
- If you have symptoms of diarrhoea and/or vomiting, cough or other respiratory symptoms, a temperature or any loss of taste or smell please do not visit the hospital or any other care facility and seek advice from 111
- Keep the environment clean and tidy
- Let's work together to keep infections out of our hospitals and care homes.

## Why are catheters used?

Catheters are inserted for many reasons. Usually catheters are inserted because the bladder cannot empty completely on its own. Sometimes it is necessary to have a catheter following surgery to monitor urine output. Catheters are also used to insert medication and occasionally to manage urinary leakage to maintain the health of your skin.

## How long will I need to have a catheter?

A catheter will need to be in for different lengths of time and this will depend on why you have needed a catheter. Sometimes you may need to be started on medication before you have the catheter removed. The bladder may need time to recover following surgery or injury, or a catheter may need to stay in until you are more mobile or your skin condition has improved. If your bladder does not empty effectively then a permanent catheter may be required. Your doctor or nurse should be able to tell you how long you may need a catheter.

## What are the benefits of having a catheter?

The most important benefit of having a catheter is the reduced risk of bladder infection and kidney damage. This can be caused by an overfull bladder or urine that stays in your bladder for too long. It can be helpful to have a catheter to monitor your urine output and to allow healing after surgery or injury.

## Are there any alternatives to having a catheter and what would happen if I decided not to have a catheter?

Catheters are inserted for many different reasons and therefore you would need to speak to your doctor or nurse to find out if any other options were available and the risks involved if you decided not to have a catheter. It may be possible for you to be taught how to pass a catheter intermittently to empty your bladder. You would need to speak to your doctor or specialist nurse to see if this is suitable. If you need a catheter to manage urinary leakage to maintain the health of your skin it may be possible to have an appliance which provides a comfortable and secure way to collect urine.

## What happens if I go home with a catheter?

Before you are discharged from hospital you will be advised how to change your leg bag and night bag. Your nurse will give you a supply of both leg bags and night bags to take home. They will arrange for further supplies to be delivered to your home. You should receive a delivery of bags and a night bag stand approximately two days after you have been discharged home. The drainage bags will be sent to you using a delivery company, you will find their freephone number with your delivery. When you need more bags you will need to contact the delivery company in advance to arrange further supplies so you do not run out. The delivery company will obtain the prescription for your supplies from your GP. You will also be referred to the district nurses who will arrange to see you to ensure you can care for your catheter, manage any problems that may occur with your catheter and will perform change of catheter if needed. If the catheter can be removed you will be given details of when this will be done and contact details of the nurses that will perform this.

## How do I care for my catheter when I go home?

Although the district nurses will manage most problems that occur with your catheter it is important that you try to follow the guidelines below to minimise these problems.

**Hygiene:** Good personal hygiene is important when you have a catheter in place to prevent a urine infection. It is important you wash your hands before and after handling the catheter or drainage bags. It is important to wash around the area where the catheter enters the body daily with soap and warm water. Men should wash under their foreskin and then replace their foreskin, women should always wash from front to back, and then wash the catheter downwards away from the body. Avoid using talc or cream around the catheter unless recommended by a doctor or nurse. If possible have a shower or bath every day, leave your bag attached to the catheter but remember to empty the drainage bag and remove support straps or sleeve before getting wet. If you notice any discharge around where the catheter enters the body inform your district nurse and they will swab this area.

**Fluid and dietary intake:** Unless you have been advised otherwise by your doctor or nurse it is recommended that you drink plenty of water. Try to drink 2 litres of fluid a day, this will dilute your urine, flush out any debris in your bladder and possibly reduce the risk of infection. Eat a well balanced diet and try to avoid constipation as this can interfere with catheter drainage.

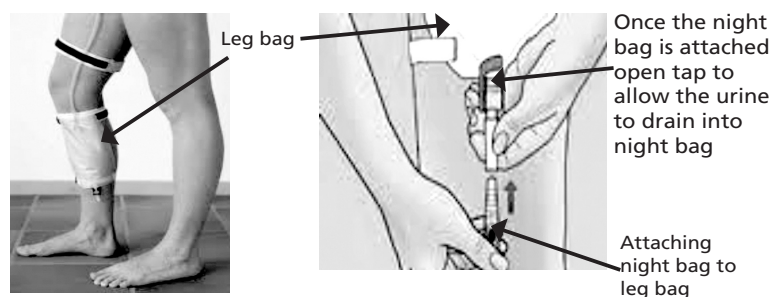
**Activity and exercise:** Having a catheter in place should not restrict your daily activities. Gentle exercise will help your catheter drain better and therefore reduce the risk of a urine infection. You can go on holiday and travel abroad with a catheter but it is important that you ask a nurse or doctor to ensure you are fit to travel.

**Sexual Activity:** It is possible to have sex whilst you have a catheter fitted however it is recommended you discuss this with your district nurse or Continence Advisor first as it may not be suitable for every patient.

**Secure catheter:** Wear appropriate straps or catheter bag sleeve to position and secure catheter to leg. This will help to prevent the catheter from rubbing and irritating the waterpipe (urethra) and will reduce the risk of penile erosion or sores occurring around the urethra.

## How often do I change my leg and night bag?

It is recommended your leg bag which is attached to your catheter is changed every five to seven days. Only remove the leg bag when it is due to be changed and avoid touching the end of the connector to minimise the risk of infection. You should wear a single use night bag, this is attached to the bottom of the leg bag at night and provides more drainage capacity overnight. Single use night bags should be disconnected from the leg bag each morning and emptied prior to disposal. All drainage bags should be disposed of into a plastic bag then into a dustbin.



## Is there an alternative to wearing a leg drainage bag?

It may be possible for you to wear a flip flow valve rather than having a catheter leg bag. A flip flow valve is a tap like device which fits into the end of your catheter. The valve can be opened every 2 to 3 hours to drain urine directly from the bladder into the toilet. It allows the bladder to fill and empty as normal. It is very discreet and can be more comfortable than wearing a leg bag. It is recommended a flip flow valve is changed every 7 days. Not everyone is suitable to use a flip flow valve and your consultant or nurse will be able to tell you if this is a suitable option.

## How often should the catheter need changing?

This will depend on the type of catheter you have in place. There are two types of catheters; long term catheters are usually blue or clear and last up to 12 weeks. Short term catheters are usually orange or yellow and last for 28 days. Your nurse will be able to tell you which type of catheter you have in and when it will need changing.

## Will I have any pain?

The catheter may feel uncomfortable at first. You could experience bladder spasms (sudden contractions of your bladder muscles) which can be painful, make you feel like you need to pass urine and cause some urine to bypass the catheter and leak out. This is your body's way of trying to expel the catheter from your body. If you have spasms, try repositioning the catheter so that it is not pulling on your bladder, try to relax, do not strain or try to push the catheter.

## What if I have problems?

**Blood in your urine:** When the catheter is first inserted or changed, your urine may be blood stained. If you have had surgery then you may have been told to expect blood in your urine for a few weeks. If you have not been told to expect blood in urine and this continues after drinking extra fluids then you should contact your district nurse for advice.

**Cloudy, smelly, thick urine:** Your urine should be light yellow in colour (although some medicines may discolour urine) and should flow freely. If your urine becomes cloudy, smelly or thick, check that you are drinking enough water. If you develop a high temperature with these symptoms, please contact your district nurse, as this could indicate that you have a urine infection.

**Leaking catheters:** Sometimes the catheter can leak around the entry site. If this happens, make sure the tubing is not blocked or kinked. Move the drainage bag below the level of your bladder and make sure you are not constipated. You may need to change the bag you are using or your district nurse may need to change your catheter to a different size and type. Having a bowel action can also cause the catheter to leak. This is nothing to worry about and happens to most people.

## When should I contact my district nurse?

It is important you contact a district nurse for advice if:

- No urine or very little urine is flowing into your leg bag and you feel your bladder is full
- Your urine has changed colour, it is very cloudy, it is bloody or has large blood clots in it and you have not been told to expect this
- You have noticed redness, swelling and irritation around where the catheter enters the body
- Your urine smells of foul odour
- Urine continuously leaks from around the catheter at the insertion site
- You feel feverish
- If your catheter has fallen out or been pulled out.

## Further Information & Support

If you have any questions or concerns about your urinary catheter, please speak to your doctor, or contact the district nurses. You can also speak to a nurse from your discharging ward.

## English

If you need information in another way like easy read or a different language please let us know.

If you need an interpreter or assistance please let us know.

## Lithuanian

Jeigu norėtumėte, kad informacija jums būtų pateikta kitu būdu, pavyzdžiui, supaprastinta forma ar kita kalba, prašome mums apie tai pranešti.

Jeigu jums reikia vertėjo ar kitos pagalbos, prašome mums apie tai pranešti.

## Polish

Jeżeli chcieliby Państwo otrzymać te informacje w innej postaci, na przykład w wersji łatwej do czytania lub w innym języku, prosimy powiedzieć nam o tym.

Prosimy poinformować nas również, jeżeli potrzebowaliby Państwo usługi tłumaczenia ustnego lub innej pomocy.

## Punjabi

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ, ਜਿਵੇਂ ਪੜ੍ਹਨ ਵਿਚ ਆਸਾਨ ਰੂਪ ਜਾਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਦੂਜੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ, ਚਾਹੀਦੀ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਦੁਭਾਸ਼ੀਏ ਦੀ ਜਾਂ ਸਹਾਇਤਾ ਦੀ ਲੋੜ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

## Romanian

Dacă aveți nevoie de informații în alt format, ca de exemplu caractere ușor de citit sau altă limbă, vă rugăm să ne informați.

Dacă aveți nevoie de un interpret sau de asistență, vă rugăm să ne informați.

## Traditional Chinese

如果您需要以其他方式了解信息，如易读或其他语种，请告诉我们。

如果您需要口译人员或帮助，请告诉我们。