

Home management of a catheter

Some catheter basics

A catheter is a soft, flexible hollow tube that is inserted into your bladder and allows urine to continuously drain from your bladder into a bag.

Avoid kinking the catheter or tubing.

Never pull on the catheter, remove it or put anything in it, unless given instructions by your doctor or nurse.

One end of the catheter can connect to a drainage bag, the other end sits inside your bladder and may have an inflatable balloon that will hold it in place. It must also be taped to your thigh.

During the day, the catheter can be connected to a leg bag strapped to your thigh or lower leg.

At night a larger drainage bag can be attached to the leg bag outlet to allow a better nights sleep.

Keep the bag below bladder level to ensure good drainage.

Washing hands before and after working with the catheter or bag is important!

Emptying your drainage bags

Drainage bags must be emptied when they are $\frac{2}{3}$ full.

1. Wash your hands well with soap and water to prevent infecting the bag or catheter.
2. If the drainage tube is folded on the bag or in a bag pocket, straighten it.
3. Hold the drainage tube over a jug or toilet. Open the drainage tube valve.
4. Try not to touch the tubing below the tap with your fingers or allow the tubing to touch the toilet.
5. When bag is empty, clean the tip of the drainage tube with an alcohol wipe.
6. Re-clamp outlet after emptying.
7. Wash your hands again.

Managing your large night drainage bag

Connecting

1. Before bed, wash your hands and catheter tubing around leg bag outlet with warm soapy water.
2. Connect your large night drainage bag to your leg bag, open connector at bottom of leg bag and close connector at bottom of night bag.
3. Hang bag on stand (never leave your drainage bag lying on the floor).
4. Clean your hands with a hand wipe after connecting the two bags.


Disconnecting

1. Empty the overnight bag.
2. Disconnect the overnight bag from the leg bag.
3. Was the overnight bag thoroughly in warm water with a mild detergent e.g. washing up liquid. Rinse thoroughly with water (a small funnel may help to fill the bag).
4. If an odour is still present, a teaspoon of white vinegar to a half litre of water can be added in the final rinse. Drain and hang up to dry. When dry recap the tubing. Each bag will need to be thrown away after 7 days.

Do not use antiseptics or other chemicals to clean bags. They may harm the bag or you!

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Home management of a catheter (cont)

Weekly bag changes

1. **Wash your hands.**
2. Collect your new bag.
3. Wash your hands with soap and water.
4. Carefully pull the used leg bag from your catheter at the join.
5. Try not to touch the end of the catheter or the new leg bag connection end.
6. Plug the new leg bag into your catheter.
7. Close the tap at the bottom of the bag.
8. Secure the leg bag to your thigh or lower leg in a comfortable position and alternate legs daily.
9. Be careful not to tighten the straps of the leg bag too much as this may irritate your skin and decrease the blood flow to your leg.

Keeping your skin clean

1. You should treat your catheter carefully and keep it clean like you do your skin.
2. Give your catheter and surrounding area a good wash with non scented, pH balanced soap when you have your daily shower. Gently roll the catheter between your thumb and index finger once a day, preferably following a shower. This helps to prevent the catheter adhering to the wall of the urethra.
3. **MALES ONLY: Uncircumcised males will need to carefully roll the foreskin back to clean the penis, then reposition the foreskin.**
4. After a bowel movement, wash the genitals, catheter and anal area with pH neutral soap and water. Wash from front to back. Do not use scented soap. Dry with a towel.
5. Avoid use of talcum powder in the genital area.

Some common problems

1. Urine leaks around the catheter:

This can be caused by:

- » A catheter that is too small or an improper balloon size. Your doctor or nurse can assess that you have the correct catheter for your needs.
- » Kinked tubing – try moving around and adjust tubing.
- » Catheter bags above level of bladder. Ensure bag is always below level of bladder.
- » An overfull drainage bag.
- » Dehydration – concentrated urine will contain sediment that can block your catheter.
- » Constipation.
- » Urinary tract infection.
- » Bladders spasms.


2. No drainage for 4 hours or more

Check all of the above and seek immediate help from your doctor or nurse.

3. Bladder spasms are quite common when the catheter is first inserted. These will pass in a day or two. If not, notify your doctor or nurse.
4. Penis tip pain can occur as a result of pressure from the catheter. Ensure effective support is provided for the drainage bag.
5. **Catheter falls out** – seek immediate help from your doctor or nurse.
6. A sign of blood in your bag from time to time can occur, but if it persists or you are concerned please contact your local doctor.
7. If your catheter is causing you problems during sexual intercourse, do not hesitate to discuss this with your doctor or nurse.
8. If you are female and your catheter is causing discomfort, discuss the possible use of oestrogen cream with your doctor or nurse.
9. If you experience any discomfort, or if your urine becomes smelly or cloudy, contact your local doctor or hospital immediately.

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General care

- Drink 2 litres of fluid a day in winter and 3 litres of fluid during summer, unless otherwise instructed by your medical practitioner. Water is the preferred fluid.
- Avoid constipation. Include 150 ml of pear juice daily (unless otherwise instructed by your medical practitioner).
- When possible take regular exercise. Change position at frequent intervals when sitting or lying for lengthy periods.
- Cranberry capsules, one a day, will help to reduce urinary infection.
- **Your doctor or nurse will advise when your catheter needs to be changed.**
- Your catheter can be *short term* or *long term*. If you have a *permanent* or *long term* catheter, you need to see the Continence Nurse Advisor for future supply information.

When to call your doctor

- If you experience any discomfort.
- Your urine becomes smelly or cloudy.
- Persistent blood in your urine.
- Catheter falls out.
- No urine drainage for 4 hours.

For further advice contact

Doctor

Continence Nurse Advisor/Community Health Nurse:

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Hospital.....

Continence Foundation of Australia
National Continence Helpline
Freecall **1800 330 066**

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Subsidy schemes available to eligible persons:

Medical Aids Subsidy Scheme (MASS)

Phone **07 3136 3636**

Fax **07 3136 3666** (continence)

Continence Aids Payment Scheme (CAPS)

Medicare Australia

Phone **132 011**

Rehabilitation Appliances program (RAP)

[DVA clients]

Phone **1300 134606**

Fax **07 3858 6411**

Toowoomba suppliers

Brady Industries

Phone **07 4639 4545**

Fax **07 4632 1240**

State-wide suppliers

Independence Australia

Phone **1300 788 855**

Fax **1300 788 811**

www.independenceaustralia.com.au

Intouch Direct

Phone **1300 134 260**

www.intouchdirect.com.au

(This is not an exhaustive list of suppliers. Please check your local telephone book for a list of suppliers)

Reference and further readings

Promoting continence, A Clinical and research Resource (2nd Ed). *Bailliere Tindal, 2003*

Caring for your Catheter Information for Men and Women. *Department of Urology Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital, 2006*

Caring for your urinary catheter. *Department of Urology Princess Alexandra Hospital Brisbane, 2011*

ANZUNS Urinary Catheter Guidelines edited by *Trish White, Lynn Brinson and Julia Glenworth, 2013*