

Managing your catheter and drainage bag

What is a catheter?

A urinary catheter is a narrow tube passed into your bladder in one of two ways. It may enter through your urethra (water pipe) or through your abdomen just above the pubic bone (supra pubic catheter). It is held in place by a small balloon inflated with sterile water. The catheter is in place to enable urine to drain either because you cannot empty your bladder properly or you are recovering from surgery.

Drainage bags are attached to hold the urine. Daytime leg bags are discreet. Usually a small bag, 500ml, is worn on your leg during the day and at night a larger (1litre) bag is added to the system. This will be hung on a stand next to your bed overnight and removed again in the morning.

What are the potential risks and side effects?

As with any foreign object entering the body there is a small risk of infection when the catheter is passed and remains in place. Sometimes the bladder is irritated for a while after the catheter is inserted but this should settle in a few days. If the urine becomes smelly or cloudy or you have discomfort in the bladder, you may have a urine infection and so would need to seek medical advice. Sometimes catheter tubing can become blocked and as a result, urine may fail to drain, causing discomfort and in this case you should also seek medical help.

What are the expected benefits of treatment?

Treatment enables the bladder to empty, minimising the risk of urinary tract infection or retention of urine leading to pressure on the kidneys. Occasionally catheters are used to manage continence.

What are the alternatives?

Some patients are able to use a valve (tap) instead of a drainage bag during the day attaching a bag at night to prevent over distension of your bladder. Your doctor will decide if this is an appropriate option for you.

What should I do when I go home?

When managing your catheter and drainage bags it is very important to ensure your hands are clean. Wash your hands with soap and water before and after dealing with your catheter.

- Clean the area where the catheter enters your body every day.
- Use non-perfumed soap, warm water and a separate clean flannel
- Wash away from your body and go a little way down the tubing
- You can shower and bath with a catheter in place

Ensure the catheter bag is securely attached to your leg otherwise the weight of the urine is likely to cause damage/injury. There are a variety of ways of securely attaching your leg bag, please ask the nurses to assist you find one that is comfortable for you.

During the day you can use a leg bag for drainage. At night to hold a larger volume you will need to add a second larger night bag. This is done as follows:

- Connect the night bag to the base of the leg bag and open the tap at the base of the leg bag
- OR if using a valve, connect it to the valve and open the valve.

Please note:

1. The night bag can be hung on a stand at the side of the bed.
2. Be careful not to lie on the tubing or you may stop urine from draining.
3. In the morning close the leg bag tap (or valve) and remove the night bag.
4. When not in use the night bag should be emptied and rinsed with clean water and stored with the blue cap on the connector to keep it clean.

The drainage bags or valve should be changed **once a week**. To change:

1. Empty the drainage bag or open the valve to empty bladder.
2. Wash your hands.
3. Remove the drainage bag or valve; **take care not to touch the open end of the catheter.**
4. Attach the new drainage bag or valve; **take care not to touch the open end of the catheter, valve or the open end of the drainage bag.**
5. Rinse bags with water before disposing of them. Wrap in two layers of paper or bags and place them in your dustbin.

Always ensure you have a supply of drainage bags. This may be arranged by the hospital at the time the catheter is inserted, or you will need to contact your GP or home delivery service for further supplies.

It is important to drink plenty of fluids whilst you have a catheter in place. It is recommended that you drink around two litres each day: some tea, coffee or juice, but plenty of water too. You must avoid becoming constipated as this will affect your catheter. Do this with a high fibre diet and plenty of fluids. If constipation is a problem, then please seek advice from your GP or a pharmacist.

Sexual relationships can still take place with a catheter, please ask for advice.

Trouble shooting

Blocked catheter:

1. Ensure the tubing is not kinked.
2. Make sure the drainage bag is below the level of the bladder.
3. Have you drunk enough fluid or are you constipated?
4. Move around a little to see if the blockage eases.

If urine continues to fail to drain, contact your community nursing team.

Leakage of urine:

1. Make sure the tubing is not kinked causing urine to bypass the catheter.
2. Make sure you are not constipated.
3. Does the tubing look blocked?

If urine is still leaking, contact your GP or community nurse as your bladder may be having bladder spasm and this can be controlled by medication.

Discomfort or pain:

1. Try to establish the cause.
2. Ensure the catheter is draining.
3. Is the urine smelly, cloudy or bloodstained?

Contact your GP or community nurse for advice.

Will I have to come back to hospital?

Catheter care can be managed in the community by District Nurses. You may need to come back to hospital for the first supra pubic catheter change or when the doctor requires you to.

Further information

Urology Department, Conquest Hospital - Tel: 0300 131 4500 Ext: 8468 or 8344
Urology Investigation Suite, Eastbourne DGH – Tel: 0300 131 4500 Ext: 770640
Urology Ward, Eastbourne DGH – Tel: 0300 131 4500 Ext: 770559 or 772473

Sources of information

The District Nursing team are able to offer support and advice on managing your catheter.

Important information

The information in this leaflet is for guidance purposes only and is not provided to replace professional clinical advice from a qualified practitioner.

Your comments

We are always interested to hear your views about our leaflets. If you have any comments, please contact the patient experience team on 0300 131 4784 or esh-tr.patientexperience@nhs.net.

Hand hygiene

We are committed to maintaining a clean, safe environment. Hand hygiene is very important in controlling infection. Alcohol gel is widely available at the patient bedside for staff use and at the entrance of each clinical area for visitors to clean their hands before and after entering.

Other formats

If you require any of our leaflets in alternative formats, such as large print or alternative languages, please contact the Equality and Human Rights Department on 0300 131 4434 or esh-tr.AccessibleInformation@nhs.net

After reading this information are there any questions you would like to ask? Please list below and ask your nurse or doctor.

Reference

The following clinicians have been consulted and agreed this patient information:

Rebecca Rushton, Specialist Urology Diagnostic Nurse

Simon Tyler-Murphy, Lead Nurse Urology and Acute Continence Service

Penny Whitling, Urology Nurse Practitioner

The directorate group that has agreed this patient information leaflet:

Diagnostic, Anaesthetic and Surgery - Urology

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Responsible clinician/author: Susan Crosby-Jones