

Going home with a urinary catheter

A patient's guide

Your doctor has advised that you require a urinary catheter so that urine can be drained from your bladder. This leaflet provides advice to help you care for your urinary catheter once you have been discharged from hospital. If you follow the guidance, it will help to avoid problems arising such as infections and blockages.

What is a urinary catheter?

A catheter is a flexible tube which is inserted through your urethra (water pipe) into your bladder and secured in place by inflation of a small balloon. Urine can then be drained away into a bag which is normally secured to your leg. Urinary catheters come in a range of sizes.

How do I take care of the urinary catheter?

- You should always wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water before and after emptying your bag or changing it for a new one. If you have a carer they should wash their hands and wear disposable gloves before handling your catheter or the bag.
- Always make sure that the drainage bag is below the level of your bladder so that urine can drain freely.
- Avoid kinks in the catheter tubing.
- Empty the drainage bag when it is about 3/4 full so it does not get too heavy. Wash your hands and open the tap to empty the urine. It can be emptied into a toilet, jug or urinal. Avoid contact of the bag with these when emptying.
- Close the tap and wipe with toilet tissue after emptying and wash your hands again.
- Do not add any water or antiseptic solutions to the drainage bag.

How do I add a night bag to the tubing?

A leg bag can be worn under your clothing during the day and has straps to secure it to your leg. A night bag is larger and is used overnight.

- Wash your hands with soap and water before connecting the night bag.
- Empty your leg bag by opening the tap.
- Leave the tap open.
- Remove the cap from the night bag.
- Insert the end of the night bag into the tubing at the end of the leg bag.
- Ensure you do not touch the tubing at the end of the leg bag or at the end of the night bag.

If you are re-using your night bag ensure you keep the cap over the tube end when not in use.

The night bag and leg bag will need to be changed as recommended by the manufacturer.

How do I know if I have an infection?

Having a urinary catheter can increase your risk of getting a urine infection. If you have any of the following signs and symptoms please contact your GP as you may have a urine infection and require treatment.

- A high temperature.
- Blood in your urine.
- Cloudy and/or smelly urine.
- Burning sensation where the catheter enters your body.
- Pain in your lower abdomen or lower back.
- Feeling more tired than usual, or confused.
- Nausea or vomiting.

How can I reduce my risk of getting an infection?

- Always wash your hands before and after handling the catheter.
 - It is important the area where the catheter enters your body is kept clean. Daily bathing or showering is sufficient to clean the area where the catheter tubing enters your body; there is no need for antiseptics to be applied. Ensure that you dry yourself gently and thoroughly to prevent soreness.
 - Whilst you are using the catheter, you will need to drink plenty of fluids in order to prevent urinary infections and constipation.
 - Avoid the use of creams or talcum powder to the area.
 - Store your spare catheters and bags in a clean dry place.
 - Dispose of products which are past their expiry date.
 - Hang your night bag onto a catheter night stand so it does not pick up bacteria from the floor. This will also aid drainage.
- When changing your bag be careful not to touch the end of the tube which goes in to the catheter.

What other problems may I experience?

- Abdominal pain due to bladder spasms caused by the presence of the catheter.
- Leakage of urine around the catheter.
- Debris or large clots in the catheter which could cause a blockage.
- Catheter falling out.

If any of the above occurs or you have any other concerns please contact your GP or District Nurse as soon as possible.

	Please complete
Type of catheter and size	
Date of insertion	
Type of leg bags	
Additional bags given and type	
GP/District Nurse informed	
Name and signature of nurse	

Speak to your GP or District Nurse about ordering additional supplies.

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