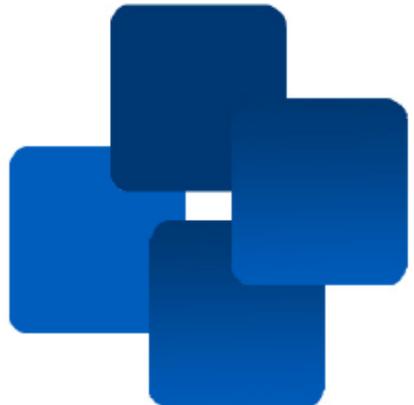


Caring for your Catheter

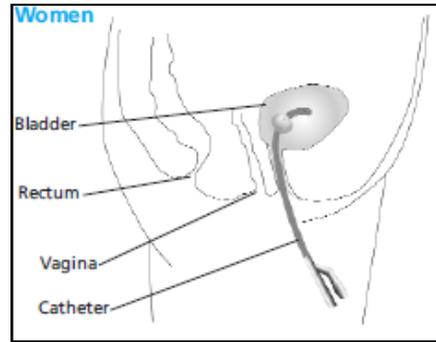
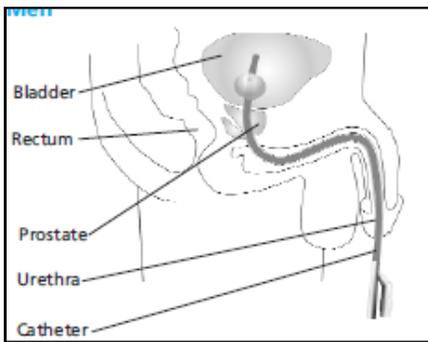
Patient Information



What is a catheter?

A catheter is a small, flexible tube that is inserted through the water pipe (urethra) into the bladder to drain urine into a bag usually strapped to your leg. Sometimes a catheter may be inserted via a small incision made in your abdomen below the belly button (umbilicus). This is called a supra-pubic catheter. The same type of catheter is used for both methods.

When the catheter is in place inside the bladder a small balloon is inflated at the end to stop it falling out. You do not pass urine in the usual way when you have a catheter in place.



Catheterisation is performed by a doctor or nurse. The nursing staff will inform you which type of catheter you have, whether it is permanent, how often it needs changing or when it will be removed.

How do I look after my catheter?

It is important that you minimise the risk of developing a urinary tract infection (UTI) with good hygiene practice. Bacteria entering your bladder can cause the catheter to block and prevent urine draining freely.

Always wash your hands thoroughly before and after handling your catheter bag or flip flow valve.

Wash the area where the catheter enters your body and the catheter tube with mild soap and water every day. Rinse well and dry thoroughly. Before a bath or shower, empty the bag and remove the supportive straps. After bathing, dry the bag well and re-apply supporting straps.

If you have had prostate surgery, there is no need to remove the catheter from the cath secure.

Men should ensure that the area under the foreskin is cleaned with mild soap and water, rinsed well, dried and the foreskin is replaced over the penis. Do not use creams, ointments or talcum powder (unless prescribed) as chemicals can damage the catheter.

Drink plenty of fluids to help prevent urinary infection and constipation. Take care not to kink the catheter or to raise the drainage bag above the level of your bladder. After your catheter has been inserted the nurse will give you any additional information and equipment you may need. Extra equipment can be obtained on prescription from your GP.

Your catheter drainage system

Your catheter is attached to a urinary drainage bag or flip flow valve. There are two types of drainage bags, those worn on the body and overnight bed bags.

Catheter bags worn on the body must be emptied regularly. Do not allow them to become over full as this risks pulling the catheter tube out. It is important that the bag is well supported. Elastic straps to hold the bag in place are supplied. Your nurse will explain the different ways of wearing the bag. If you are using a Flip Flow valve this will be demonstrated to you.

You may also have been given an extra supportive strap which is worn on or around the thigh and supports the catheter tube itself. This prevents uncomfortable 'drag' and minimises complications.

Overnight drainage bags are connected to the bottom of your leg bag or flip flow valve to collect the urine overnight. Remove the straps supporting the leg bag and attach the overnight drainage bag to the bottom of the bag or flip flow valve. Once connected, open the bag tap or the flip flow valve and leave open to allow urine to drain freely during sleep. Keep the bed bag on a stand below your bladder. **Do not let the bag lie on the floor.**

In the morning, close the tap on the leg bag or flip flow valve, remove the bed bag and apply the supportive straps. Empty the bed bag, wrap in newspaper or a plastic bag and dispose in your normal rubbish. **Do not reuse bags.**

The nursing staff will show you how to connect the bag before discharge from hospital. A leg bag or flip flow valve must be changed every 7 days. A night bag must be changed daily. **Bags are not reusable.**

Fluids and Dietary advice

It is important to keep your bladder and bowels healthy to prevent complications and keep your catheter draining.

Drink between three and four pints of fluid every day. This is equivalent of 5 - 6 mugs or 8 -10 tea cups per day. If you have a condition which requires fluid restriction please discuss this with your doctor or nurse. Reducing caffeine intake is beneficial. This includes tea, coffee and fizzy drinks. A healthy diet which includes 5 portions of fruit or vegetables per day will help prevent constipation and maintain good urinary drainage from your catheter.

What if I experience problems?

Your District Nurse, GP or Nurse Practitioner can advise you on what action to take. You may experience some of the following problems:

Bladder spasms - Bladder spasms feel like abdominal cramp and are quite common. The pain is caused by the bladder trying to squeeze out the catheter balloon.

Leakage around the catheter - This is called by-passing, It can be the result of bladder spasms or can take place when you open your bowels.

Blood or debris in the urine - This is common with a catheter, but if you see large clots or solid pieces of debris in the catheter tube contact your nurse as this can cause a blockage.

Blockage - Try and unblock the catheter. Check the drainage bag is below the level of your bladder, the catheter tube has no kinks or twists in it, there are no clots or debris in the catheter tube and you are drinking enough. If the catheter will not unblock, contact your District Nurse immediately or get in touch with your Nurse Practitioner during office hours. Outside office hours contact the out of hours GP service or attend the Accident and Emergency Department.

Catheter falling out - Contact your District Nurse or Nurse Practitioner immediately. If there is doubt about whether your catheter should be replaced, this will be discussed with the on-call urologist.

Urine Infection - Bacteria in the urine is common once a catheter has been in place for more than 10 to 14 days. If you have cloudy urine, cystitis (a burning sensation), unpleasant smelling urine or a high temperature contact your GP straight away. They will decide if you should be prescribed a course of antibiotics.

Contact Details

Monday to Friday 9am-5pm - Your Community Nurse

East and North Hertfordshire NHS Trust

Urology Nurse Practitioners

Tel: 01438 284356

Out of Hours

Out of hours GP service

NHS Direct 111

What type of catheter do I have?

Type of catheter:

Balloon size (ml):

Date of insertion:

Date for catheter change:

Clinic follow-up arranged:

Type of leg-bags:

Night bags given:

GP/District Nurse informed?

Name and signature of nurse: _____

Date of publication: October 2014

Author: Jo Barks / B Aldwinckle

Reference: Version: 1

Review Date: October 2017

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