

WHAT IS A CATHETER?

Your catheter is a narrow, flexible, soft tube, which is inserted into your bladder, via the urethra (or through the abdominal wall, when it is known as a supra-pubic catheter) .This is then attached to a drainage bag where your urine collects. Your catheter should not fall out as it is secured in your bladder with a small balloon. The most common reasons for using a catheter are before and after surgery; medical conditions i.e. stroke, Parkinson's or multiple sclerosis; being unable to pass urine.

CARE OF YOUR CATHETER

Always wash your hands before and after dealing with your catheter. Wash the area around where your catheter enters the body, with unperfumed soap daily and dry thoroughly. When possible, a daily shower or bath may be taken. An empty leg bag can be left in place on your leg whilst you shower. Ensure you dry the bag well and avoid using talcum powder near your catheter. Suprapubic catheters should have the skin around the entrance site washed with cooled, boiled water at least twice a day. A dressing won't be necessary unless there is a discharge. Men should pay particular attention to washing under the foreskin, whilst women should always wash from front to back, to prevent contamination.

When does it need to be changed?

Most catheters can be left in place for twelve weeks, though this may be different in some cases. Your catheter may be changed in the Urodynamics Department, or by your public health nurse or GP. It is important to keep a record of when your catheter was changed. However a catheter may need to be changed more frequently if it becomes blocked and regular bladder washouts maybe beneficial if this occurs. Your nurse or doctor will advise you about this.

DIET

To help to keep your catheter draining well, you must drink at least 8 cups of water (2pints) per day. The drinks do not necessarily have to be water but avoid too much tea or high sugar content drinks. Your urine should be light in colour, if it looks dark in colour (concentrated), drink more. Eat plenty of fruit and high fibre foods eg all bran, to prevent constipation as this can put extra pressure on your bladder and cause urine leakage. When possible take plenty of exercise. Cranberry juice is sometimes recommended to reduce the risk of urinary infection, though it's not advised for people with stomach problems. Take two 200ml glasses of juice a day, or two capsules.

DRAINAGE BAGS

Your leg bag will need to be emptied regularly eg 3-4hrly, before it becomes completely full and must be changed weekly. Wash your hands thoroughly before and after emptying or changing your catheter bag. When changing your bag, pinch the end of the catheter before removing the old bag to prevent urine escaping. Remove the protective cover from the new bag and insert the bag inlet connector into the catheter immediately. Avoid touching the end of the inlet connector. Wear the smaller bag when you are up and about and connect the larger night bag to the leg bag at night, ask your nurse to show you if unsure. The night bag is single use only and must be disposed of each morning. To discard urinary bags, empty first and then place in a plastic bag and dispose of it in your rubbish bin. It is important not to burn these bags. You will be given a prescription for these on discharge. These urinary drainage bags can be purchased in your local pharmacy. You may use a Flip-Flo valve which is a tap like device which fits into the end of your catheter. It is an alternative to using a urinary drainage bag. Your bladder can be emptied intermittently by releasing/opening the flip-flo. Your flip-flo should be changed every 5—7 days. Wash your hands and remove your old flip-flo and then replace it with your new one. Place your used one, in your rubbish bin

Possible Problems:

Catheter Leaking (by passing) caused by • kinks in the catheter or drainage bag tube. Check position of tube and remove any kinks • Constipation relieved by eating a balanced diet and drinking lots of fluids.

Wrong size catheter Contact your nurse or doctor • Catheter blockage due to encrustation at the catheter tip. This may require bladder washouts by your PHN

Bladder spasm (cramps) Bladder irritation or constipation Contact your nurse or doctor. No urine draining
Kinks in catheter or drainage bag tube again check position of drainage tube and remove any kinks.

Poor fluid intake or constipation drink more fluids especially in the hot weather and eat well balanced diet
Cloudy, strong smelling urine, pain/discomfort around catheter, or blood in the urine.

Urinary tract infection drink plenty of fluids and contact your GP or nurse immediately

Catheter falls out Premature balloon deflation due to faulty catheter, notify your GP or nurse immediately.