

Urology

How to look after your urinary catheter at home

Your doctor or nurse has explained to you that you will go home with a urinary catheter. This may be a long-term solution to your urinary problems or a short-term measure for a certain period after which you will return to the hospital to have the catheter removed.

What is a urinary catheter?

An indwelling urinary catheter is a thin flexible tube that drains urine directly from your bladder so that you will not need to use the toilet. The urinary catheter is held in place by a tiny water filled balloon to prevent the catheter from falling out or from being in the wrong place. During the day you may connect the urinary catheter to a leg bag that will allow you to walk around more freely and give you greater dignity.

Leg bags

There are different types of drainage bags available through your GP or District Nurse and it is important that you choose the right one to suit you. The leg drainage bag connects to your urinary catheter and can be attached to your lower leg or thigh by a pair of elastic straps (the nursing staff on the ward will show you how to do this). A catheter can be subject to movement which can lead to tension on the catheter, especially when the bag begins to fill up. The G Strap provides additional support to the catheter tubing or leg bag tubing and fits comfortably around the thigh (for a urethral catheter) or abdomen (for a suprapubic catheter).

When adjusting the leg bag straps it is important not to stop the flow of urine through the tubing or to have them too tight that they impair your circulation. When emptying the leg bag, always wash your hands first. You can empty the urine from the bag directly into the toilet or into a clean container. Once you are comfortably positioned, open the drainage tap,



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(this may be a slide action tap or a lever). Do not touch the drainage port with the container or toilet seat. Remember to close the tap once the leg bag is empty and then wash your hands. Empty the leg bag when it is full or when it becomes heavy.

Getting ready for bed

During the night, a larger two litre capacity bag (like the one used whilst you were in hospital) should be attached to the leg bag, allowing for an undisturbed nights sleep and continuous urine drainage. To do this, loosen or remove all straps that are used to secure the leg bag. Connect the tubing of the night drainage bag to the drainage port of the leg bag and open the leg bag drainage tap. Place the night drainage bag at the foot or the side of the bed, remembering to keep it below the level of your bladder.

Catheter stands or hangers are available from the District Nurse, a chemist, or can be purchased on Amazon. Contact your GP or District Nurse for further information. In the morning, simply close the leg bag tap and adjust the straps once again around your leg.

Empty the night drainage bag the same way as the leg bag. Disposable non-drainable bags are now being used in the community setting which are disposed of daily.

It is recommended that you change the leg bag on a weekly basis. To do this, wash and dry your hands thoroughly and empty the drainage bag. Clamp the urinary catheter closed by squeezing or pinching. Using a twisting and pulling motion disconnect the drainage bag tubing from the urinary catheter and connect the new leg bag. Dispose of the used drainage bag with your household rubbish making sure it is in a sealed plastic bag.

General advice

- When dealing with your urinary catheter always remember to wash and dry your hands before and after.
- Drink fluids to flush out your system (at least 1 litre).
- Eat a well-balanced diet - constipation can sometimes place extra pressure on your bladder and cause urine to leak.

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Potential problems

Urine may leak around the sides of the urinary catheter. This could be because the catheter is too small, blocked or you are having bladder spasms.

Check that the catheter tubing is not twisted and that there is urine draining into the bag. If problems continue or you develop any of the following symptoms, please contact your District Nurse or GP as soon as possible:

- Strong smelling cloudy looking urine
- Fever / temperature
- Swelling around the catheter
- Bleeding around the catheter
- Blood in your urine
- No urine drainage

Please do not contact the hospital as only verbal advice can be given.

If your urinary catheter is for the long term, a further change of catheter may be needed after around 10 to 12 weeks. This may be done by a District Nurse in your own home or if necessary, as a day attendee at a community clinic. Alternatively, your consultant may arrange for the catheter to be removed after a certain period. If this is the case, an appointment will be made for you to attend the hospital as a day case after discharge.

Equipment

If you require more equipment, such as drainage bags, please contact your GP or District Nurse.

If you have a Coventry GP, you can contact the Coventry district nurses through the central booking service (HUB) on telephone: 0300 200 0011. For North Warwick & Rugby & South Warwick please contact Warwickshire Integrated Single Point of Access on telephone 01926 600818. The referral to the district nurses will be made by the ward/area from which you were discharged.

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If you have any concerns or problems with your catheter, please contact the district nurses. If you do not have a Coventry GP, you can contact the district nurses in your area through your GP surgery.

For further information please contact Urology Clinical Nurse Specialist on 024 7696 5373.

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