

Obstetrics and Gynaecology

Going Home with a Urinary Catheter

You are going home with a urinary catheter following your operation, as you are unable to naturally pass sufficient urine. This is usually a short term measure after which you will return to hospital to have the catheter removed.

What is a urinary catheter?

A catheter is a hollow flexible tube which drains urine directly from your bladder. It enters the bladder by passing through the urethra (urethral catheter) or through a channel made in the abdominal wall (suprapubic catheter). Once the catheter is in place a small balloon, filled with water, is inflated to prevent the catheter from falling out. As the bladder fills it drains down into a catheter bag.

Drainage bags

A small drainage bag is strapped to the thigh for daytime use and holds 500 mls; this should be emptied when it is 3/4 full or becomes heavy. A leg bag is discreet and is kept on all the time but will need replacing every five to seven days. This is kept in place with straps which can be removed at night time. For night time use, a larger two litre bag should be attached to the leg bag, open the tap of the leg bag to allow the urine to flow into the night bag. In the morning the night bag can be removed and emptied, close the tap on the leg bag and replace the straps.

This also needs replacing every five to seven days. The night drainage bag should be attached to the catheter stand provided, in order to prevent the valve coming into contact with the floor and help prevent infection.

If you did not have a drainage stand when leaving hospital, you can purchase one from the chemist, or contact the district nurse.



Patient Information

Flipflo valve

A flipflo valve is connected to the end of the catheter which enables you to empty your bladder whenever necessary.

- Your bladder should be emptied at regular intervals, at least every three to four hours. Always wash your hands before and after handling the valve.
- Whilst holding the catheter tube over the toilet, push the tap at the base of the catheter downwards. The urine will drain automatically until the bladder is empty. Then turn the tap back to the upright position, which closes the tap and stops any urine from leaking.

How to care for your catheter

- Always wash your hands and dry them well before and after emptying your catheter or changing the bag.
- To prevent urinary tract infection it is important that the end of the tap does not touch the toilet bowl or seat.
- Shower or bath daily, or wash the area where the catheter enters your body with mild soap and water.
- Do not use talcum powder or creams around the catheter.
- Make sure the tubing does not become kinked or twisted as this can prevent the normal flow of urine into the drainage bag causing a back flow of urine. This could lead to a urinary tract infection or urine by-passing the catheter.
- Keep the drainage bag below the level of the bladder.
- Drink two to three litres of fluid a day to ensure the catheter drains well and helps to keep the urine clear.
- Eat a balanced diet containing five portions of fruit and vegetables daily. Also eat food containing fibre, such as wholemeal cereals and bread which will help to prevent constipation.

Common Problems

If there is no urine draining into the bag, check the tubing is not twisted or kinked. Make sure the drainage bag is below bladder level and that the bag is connected correctly. Also check it does not need emptying. Ensure you are drinking enough liquids and you are not constipated.

Patient Information

If the catheter is leaking near your body again make sure the tubing is not kinked and the drainage bag is not too full.

If it is leaking where it is connected to the bag check the connections are secure.

If you experience a slight leak around the outside of the catheter it may be as a result of a bladder spasm. This is not an emergency providing the catheter is draining.

If your urine is cloudy, bloodstained or smelly you may have a urine infection. Drink more fluids and contact your GP.

Further Information

For further advice please contact the Urogynaecology Clinical Nurse Specialists on 024 7696 7350.

Outside office hours contact The Emergency Gynaecology Unit on 024 7696 7000.

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format please contact 024 7696 7343 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

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