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Catheter Care for Women

Department of Urogynaecology

Catheter care for women

This leaflet is intended for women who have an indwelling urethral catheter.

What is a catheter?

A catheter is a flexible tube that is inserted into your bladder via your urethra (water-pipe) to allow it to drain.

Why do I have a catheter?

The main reasons are listed below but these will be discussed with you

- your bladder will not empty fully
- you cannot pass urine at all
- you are unable to hold on to your urine
- you may have had a bladder injury

Why is it so important to have a catheter attached to a bag?

If you have had a distension episode (where a large amount of urine is drained from your bladder when you have been unable to pass it naturally); it is vitally important to “rest” the bladder. The amount of time of rest will depend on the circumstances that this occurred and how much was drained.

If we allow your bladder to stay half full, then you can be left with permanent damage to your bladder and/or get recurrent urine infections.

When should I ask for help?

- If you have acute/ sudden pains in the lower part of your tummy
- If the urine is not draining and you have tried the self help measures
- If your catheter falls out
- If there is blood in the urine.
- If your urine is very cloudy or smelly.
- If urine is leaking around the catheter enough to make your clothing wet.

If you have any acute illness, please contact your GP (or labour ward if you are pregnant or have recently had a baby). If you need to ask for advice then please ring the ward, the district nurse or midwife or 01932 722124 Monday to Friday.

Further Information

We endeavour to provide an excellent service at all times, but should you have any concerns please, in the first instance, raise these with the Matron, Senior Nurse or Manager on duty.

If they cannot resolve your concern, please contact our Patient Experience Team on 01932 723553 or email asp-tr.patient.advice@nhs.net. If you remain concerned, the team can also advise upon how to make a formal complaint.

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- Make sure that the bag is below the level of your bladder (if you are unsure, then walk around for a few minutes to see if it drains more)
- Ensure that the straps are behind the leg bag tubing
- Ensure that the catheter and its tubing are not twisted, pulled too tight or compressed by tight clothing.

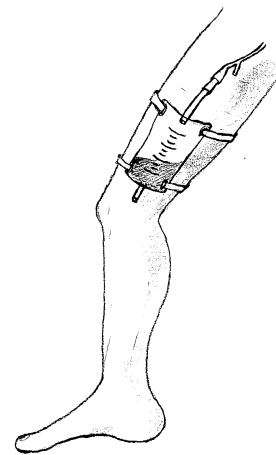
What should my urine look like?

- Ideally your urine should be a light yellow in colour.
- If it is too orange, then you may need to drink more.
- It should be clear and non-offensive
- If it is blood stained, offensive or cloudy then you should contact your doctor, district nurses or community midwife (if you have recently given birth or are pregnant).

It is important to try and be as active as normal to prevent any other complications like a DVT (clot in the leg).

Other healthy steps to take

- Drink about 6-8 glasses of fluid per day (usually about 1.5 - 2 litres)
- Women who are breastfeeding will need to drink a bit more than this.
- Eat a high fibre diet to avoid constipation.
- Remember to sit on the toilet to empty your bowels
- Try to keep a regular pattern to your bowel motions.



How do I look after my catheter?

Supplies

- You will receive a few bags to begin with, from the hospital which should last you a week.
- Ongoing supplies may need to come from your GP.
- Each week you will require -
 - 1 leg bag
 - 7 night bags.
- Most makes of bags are interchangeable because the attachments are universal
- Leg straps and an anchor strap for the catheter will reduce movement and pulling

How do I empty the bag?

- First , wash your hands
- When the bag is $\frac{2}{3}$ full, hold the tap over the toilet bowl and turn the tap to release the urine form the bag
- After the bag has emptied, return the lever or push button to its original position to turn it off.

Hygiene

- Wash the skin area around where the catheter enters your urethra with water twice per day.

- Avoid the use of talc, antiseptic, bubble bath, bath salts and creams etc.
- Always wash from front to back and dry the area thoroughly.
- Only disconnect the leg bag when you are changing your leg bag.
- Empty the leg bag and leave it on to have a shower or bath. Remove the straps to save them getting wet.



Changing the leg (day) bag

Before leaving the hospital the nurse/ midwife should attach a leg bag and show you how to do this

- The leg bag should be changed *once per week*.
- First, wash your hands thoroughly.
- Empty the leg bag using the tap
- Open the new leg bag (leaving the protective cap still on it).
- Pinch the end of the catheter with thumb and fore-finger
- Avoid touching the ends of the catheter.
- Remove the drainage bag tubing from the catheter, twisting the bag connector gently as you do this
- Remove the protective cap from the new bag and immediately insert the drainage bag tube into the catheter. Replace the protective cap onto the old bag
- Ensure the tap at the bottom is in the 'closed' position and strap it to your leg.

What happens at night?

- A night bag should be attached to the tap **at the bottom** of the leg bag (but do not detach the leg bag).
- After you have securely fitted it, then open the tap and leave it open until the morning.
- The urine should drain into the night bag via the leg bag.
- In the morning, close the tap, detach the night bag and discard it.
- You should use a **new** night bag every night.

What do I do with my used catheter bags?

- Empty the urine into the toilet
- Put the bag in a plastic bag and put it in your usual waste bin.

What do I do if my catheter is leaking or not draining?

- Check that the bag is properly connected
- Check that the tap is closed properly
- If the urine is of a very small quantity and dark in colour, then try to drink more

