

## Having a urinary catheter

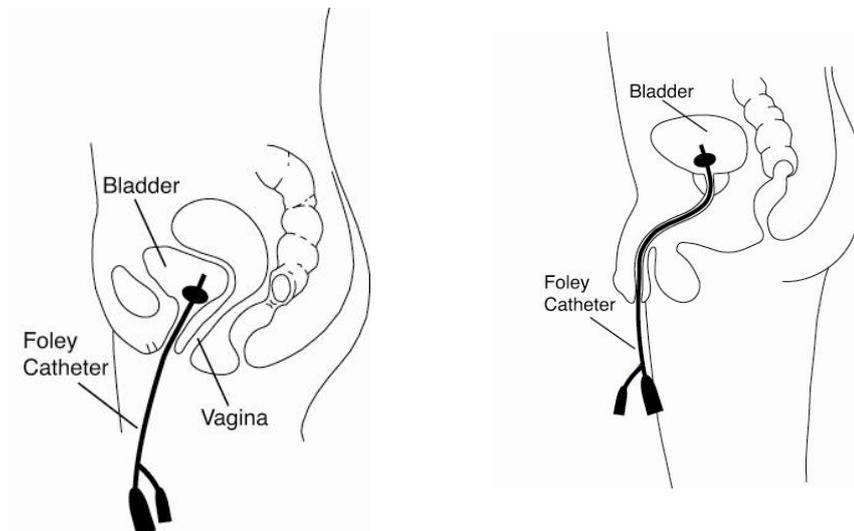
A catheter is a hollow tube that drains urine from the bladder. As urine collects in your bladder it passes down the catheter into the drainage bag.

There are many reasons why someone may need a catheter while in hospital, such as:

- they have an acute illness
- they have just had surgery
- they have problems with passing urine.

Your nurse or doctor will be happy to discuss why you need a catheter and how long it is likely to stay in.

A catheter can be inserted on the ward by a nurse or if you are undergoing a surgical procedure it may be in place when you return to the ward. The insertion of a catheter can be uncomfortable but an anaesthetic gel is used. Once the catheter is in place the discomfort felt will be minimal.

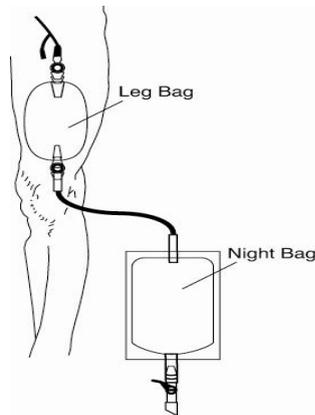


The above diagram show's a side view of the catheter in place in the bladder in a female and a male patient.

## There are two types of drainage bag:

**A leg bag** is worn during the day under normal clothing. Leg bags are attached either to your thigh or calf. As the leg bag fills it gradually gets heavier and you may feel the strain on the straps. The leg bag can be emptied by opening the tap at the bottom of the bag.

**A night bag** can be worn instead of or with the leg bag. This can hold more urine so it does not need to be emptied during the night. The night bag is attached to the leg bag overnight and the straps of the leg bag can be removed.



## Looking after your catheter

- It is important to keep your catheter and its site of entry clean. Ordinary soap and water is all that is needed - avoid talcum powder and creams. Men should ensure they wash under the foreskin while women should always wash from front to back to avoid contamination
- A good fluid intake of 6-9 cups a day (unless you are on a fluid restriction) helps dilute urine, which reduces the risk of infection
- Avoid straining at stool and constipation as this can apply pressure on the bladder.
- A shower is preferable to a bath although both are acceptable
- Always wash your hands before and after handling your catheter
- Urine bags only need to be changed after 7 days

If you are unsure of anything to do with your catheter, ask your Consultant.