

Your urinary catheter at home

This booklet gives information about caring for your urinary catheter when you are at home – please ask staff any questions that you may have.

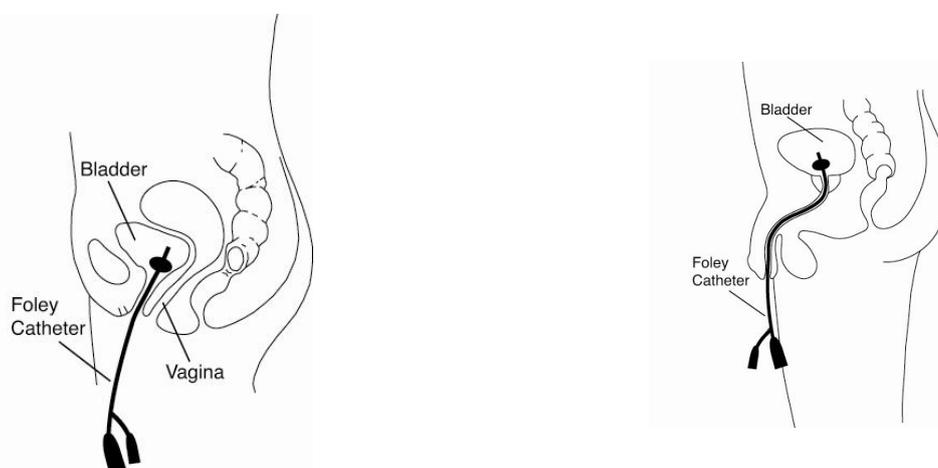
A catheter is a hollow tube that drains urine from the bladder. As urine collects in your bladder it passes down the catheter into the drainage bag.

There are many reasons why someone may need a catheter when leaving hospital, such as:

- they have loss of bladder control
- 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 your discomfort will be minimal.



The above diagrams show side views of a catheter in place in a woman and man.

Supplies

All catheter drainage bags and valves are available on prescription from your GP, or a home delivery service can be arranged. Please ask your nurse before your discharge so that the appropriate arrangements can be made.

More information

Should you require any further information or support please contact your consultant.

Catheter valve

Any patient who normally uses a catheter and leg bag could benefit from changing to a catheter valve. The valve is attached to the catheter instead of a leg bag and therefore allows the bladder to fill in the normal way. When you feel the desire to urinate, or at least every four hours, release the valve to allow the urine to flow and therefore empty your bladder.

A valve needs to be changed every 7 days. At night it can be connected to a night bag with the valve left open to allow drainage if you wish.

Your catheter type

A long-term catheter can remain in place for 10-12 weeks and is usually changed by the district nurse or occasionally in the hospital.

Catheter type _____

Date inserted _____

Date to be changed _____

Batch no. _____

(to be filled in by health care professional)

Common problems

Should you encounter any of the following problems contact your District Nurse for help:

- *By passing* Some urine can leak from around the catheter tube. This is usually caused by a muscle spasm in the bladder, but it can also be caused by constipation or if your catheter has become blocked.
- *Infection* A urinary catheter in your bladder increases your risk of infection. You may have an infection if you feel unwell with a fever, your urine looks cloudy or you find it has a strong odour, contact your GP.
- *Catheter falling out* Your catheter is kept in place by a balloon of water. Very occasionally the balloon can deflate causing the catheter to fall out.
- *Discomfort* A catheter can sometimes cause discomfort. This can usually be relieved by using a different type of catheter or a different collecting system.

Looking after your catheter

- It is important to keep your catheter and its entry site 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 of water (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
 - All urine bags should be changed every 7 days.

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. Ensure that the valve of the leg bag is left open to allow the urine to drain.

