

Managing Your Catheter A Guide for Patients and Carers

Community Nursing Team



What is a Catheter?

A catheter is a hollow, flexible tube which allows urine to drain from your bladder. It has a small balloon at the tip to prevent the catheter falling out. Urine drains from the bladder down the catheter and it is collected in a urine drainage bag. You will not need to pass urine while you have a catheter. Your catheter will be changed by a nurse either at a clinic, or at home if you are housebound.

Drainage Bags

You will need two types of bag: a leg bag and a night bag.

Leg Bag

A leg bag is connected to your catheter and attached to either your thigh or calf with straps. The bag should be positioned below the level of your bladder and should not touch the floor. You should only disconnect this bag from the catheter when you change it once a week. Do not let the bag get too full. Empty it when two-thirds full.

Night Bag

When you go to bed, your leg bag should be attached to a night bag. This can hold more urine so you do not have to get up in the night.

Attaching Your Night Bag

- Loosen leg straps when you get into bed.
- The night bag should not lie on the floor.
- Use a new night bag each night and remember to open the tap of the leg bag to allow urine to drain

Emptying Your Drainage Bag

- Open the tap at the bottom and let it drain into a toilet if possible.
- If you use a container it must be used for this purpose only.
- The catheter bag/tap must NOT come into contact with the toilet.
- DO NOT FORGET TO CLOSE THE TAP.

Catheter Valve:

If you have a valve attached to your catheter instead of a leg bag, you should open the valve and empty your bladder:

- When you feel it is full
- At least every 3-4 hours during the day.
- Before opening your bowels.
- Before going to bed.

Attach a new night bag to the valve every night and remember to open the valve while the bag is attached.

Replace the leg bag or catheter valve once a week.

Eating and Drinking

What you eat and drink can help with the management of your catheter.

- Drink at least 8–10 cups of fluid a day.
- Avoid caffeine which is in tea, coffee, cola and hot chocolate.
- Constipation can affect your catheter. This can be avoided by drinking plenty of fluids and eating fruit and vegetables.
- Also try to add some fibre such as porridge, baked beans and brown bread

Personal Hygiene

Personal hygiene is very important. Poor hand washing is a major cause of catheter infections.

So remember these rules:

- Always **wash your hands** before and after handling your catheter or drainage bags.
- A professional carer should always wear a clean pair of gloves when attending to your catheter and drainage bag.
- Hands should be washed before applying and after removing the gloves.
- Wash the skin in the area where the catheter enters the body with a mild soap and water at least twice a day.
- Clean the tubing using downward strokes away from the body.
- Dry the area thoroughly.
- DO NOT use talcum powder or creams.
- Try to have a bath or shower every day.
- Men should wash carefully under their foreskin (unless they have been circumcised). dry the area carefully and ensure the foreskin is replaced over the end of the penis.
- Women should ensure they wash the genital area from front to back to prevent contamination from the back passage. Dry the area carefully.

Prescriptions

All catheters and urine bags are obtainable on prescription from your GP. Your community nurse can advise you of what catheter stock you may need but it is your responsibility to request the prescription. Catheters and drainage bags should be stored in a cool place. Catheters must not be folded

Disposal of Catheter Waste

Waste catheters and drainage bags can be disposed of by placing in a carrier bag and then put in the household waste collection, unless advised otherwise. If you go away from home, you should take catheter equipment with you, including: spare catheter and drainage bags, dressing pack, sterile saline and anaesthetic gel.

Community Nurse Contact Number: 0333 405 3000

Possible Problems you may have with your catheter:

1. A bladder spasm or cramp occasionally: This usually stops within a few days and is nothing to worry about. If it persists please speak to your Community Nurse for advice.

2. Bypassing: Urine leaking around the outside of the catheter. This may be caused by a blockage or as a result of a spasm. Ensure that the tubing is not kinked or restricted and that you have emptied the leg bag. If your catheter continues to bypass then contact the Community Nurses.

3. Blocked Catheter: If no urine is draining, here are some things you can do yourself:

- Make sure the tubing is not twisted or restricted by tight clothing.
- Check the catheter is below the level of the bladder, especially if sitting in a low chair.
- Empty the leg bag as the catheter will not drain if the bag is full.
- Make sure you are drinking enough fluids.

If you have checked all of these things and the catheter is still not draining then call the Community Nurses on 03334053000. The Nurses can be contacted 24 hours a day.

4. Urine infection: the following may be symptoms of a urine infection:

- Abdominal pain or pain in the lower back.
- If urine is not draining and you have followed the simple self help tips above
- If there is blood in your urine.
- If you have a fever, temperature, or flu-like symptoms.
- If your urine is cloudy, smelly or you have a burning sensation, which does not improve after drinking extra fluids.

If you have any of these symptoms you should contact you GP as soon as possible.

. 5.If your catheter falls out: Contact the community Nurses straight away on 03334053000

For further information about this service contact:

Community Nursing Team
The Poynt, Units 2-3,
Poynters Road
Luton, LU4 0LA

Tel: 0333 405 3000

If you require this information in a different format such as in large print or on audio tape, or in a different language please contact the service on the details above.

If you have any compliments about this service or suggestions for improvements, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service on 0300 131 1000 (charges may apply depending on your network) or email: ccs-tr.pals@nhs.net.

For free, confidential health advice and information 24 hours a day, 365 days a year please contact NHS 111.