

Going Home with a Catheter

This booklet has been produced to help you or your carer look after your catheter at home. If you have any questions when you have read this booklet please ask your doctor, nurse or continence advisor.

The Urinary System

The kidneys produce urine which passes down the ureters into the bladder where it is stored. Urine is expelled from the bladder through the urethra.

What is a Catheter?

A catheter is a hollow tube which drains urine from the bladder into the drainage bag. You will not pass urine yourself.

Why is a Catheter used?

About 10% of all hospital admissions will have a catheter fitted at sometime. There are many reasons why a catheter is necessary and you will be told by your doctor or your nurse why you need one and for how long it has to stay in.

If the catheter is for long term use it will be changed every 3 months by your district nurse. However, a catheter is often a temporary measure. If after one month you do not know the date for its removal, please ask your district nurse.

How does it stay in?

At the tip of the catheter is a small balloon which is inflated with water after the catheter is put in, this stops it from sliding out.

Caring For Your Catheter At Home

You will be taught how to care for your catheter before you are discharged from hospital.

To avoid the risk of infection follow these simple instructions:

- Always wash and thoroughly dry your hands before and after dealing with your catheter or drainage bag.
- The skin around the catheter should be washed daily with unscented soap and water, rinsed and dried thoroughly.
- Always clean the catheter tubing where it enters the water passage using downward strokes away from the body.
- If possible have a daily bath or shower.

What to Eat and Drink

Drink at least four pints of liquid per day, which is about one cup per hour during the day time. Keep a cup of water by your bed at night so that you can have a drink if you wake.

Avoid constipation as this can prevent the catheter draining properly. Ensure you have plenty of fibre in your diet, i.e. brown bread, fruit and vegetables. Drink plenty of fluids and if you are able, take plenty of exercise.

Emptying the Drainage Bag

You will be shown how to empty the drainage bag by opening the tap at the bottom of the bag. Empty it into the toilet if possible.

If you are unable to get to a toilet, drain the urine into a suitable container, i.e. a bottle or jar with a screw lid. After use, this container should be washed out with warm soapy water, rinsed and dried. (Normal household detergent will do this purpose).

Make sure that you close the outlet tap properly after emptying the bag. Empty your bag before it gets too full to prevent urine building up in the tubing causing leakage or discomfort.

What to do at Night

- At night a larger drainage bag can be connected to the smaller bag. You will be shown how to do this before you leave hospital.
- Once you have connected the night bag, open the drainage tap on the smaller bag.
- The night bag can be connected to a stand beside your bed.
- Each morning, close the drainage tap on the smaller bag and disconnect the night bag and empty it.
- The smaller bag can stay connected to the catheter for 5 – 7 days, leaving the small bag connected in this way helps to reduce the risk of infection.
- The night bag should be disposed of daily and a fresh one used each night.

Disposal of Drainage Bags

- First empty the bag, and it can then be wrapped in newspaper, put into a plastic bag place in your dustbin.
- A discreet drainage bag will be fitted for you before you leave the hospital. If you are not happy with the time of drainage bag you are using, tell your nurse who can advise on a different type.
- An initial supply of equipment will be given to you, before you leave hospital.
- Further supplies of drainage bags are available on prescription; you will need to speak to your district nurse about this.

Sexual Activity

Sexual activity is possible with a catheter in place. Please discuss this with your nurse or continence advisor.

Common Problems and How to Deal with Them

Bladder spasm or cramp in the abdomen are common when a new catheter is put in, it may sometimes cause a small leakage of urine around the catheter. The spasm usually passes off within a day, but if it persists tell your nurse, in office hours.

If no urine drains from your catheter check:

- Is the tubing kinked?
- Is the bag below bladder level?
- Are you constipated?
- Is the drainage bag connected the right way up?
- Have you been drinking enough?

Try walking or moving around as this may dislodge a blockage.

If nothing drains in four hours or you are in pain, contact your nurse on the emergency number given to you.

If the catheter falls out and you are able to pass urine, call your nurse in office hours. If you cannot pass urine and your bladder becomes painful, telephone your nurse on the emergency number.

If urine leaks out around the catheter, this is not serious but report it to your nurse, in office hours.

If you see blood in your urine, report it to your nurse in office hours. If the bleeding is heavy, telephone your nurse on the emergency number given to you.

If you develop a fever, let your nurse know as this may indicate an infection.

Where to get Help

During the hours 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday – your District Nurse will give you the telephone number. If your District Nurse has not yet contacted you yet please contact your GP Surgery for information.

In an emergency – from 5pm to 9am, call 0845 4647, which is NHS Direct. Your details will be taken and passed onto the appropriate nurse. The nurse will then contact you.

If you do not have a District Nurse Emergency Contact number you will need to contact the above number and the same procedure will apply.

Equipment Details

Catheter:	Type:
	Size:
	Balloon Size:
	Order Code:

Leg Bag:	Type:
	Code:

Night Bag	Type:
	Code:

You may contact the Hospital Continence Advisor if you have any questions:

Monday – Friday: 8:30am – 4:30pm

Tel No: 01234 792624