Catheter Care

How to Care for a Urinary Catheter

Lions Gate Hospital
231 East 15th Street
North Vancouver BC V7L 2L7
Tel: 604-988-3131
About Your Catheter

Your urinary catheter allows for urine drainage from your bladder. A small balloon on one end of the tube holds it inside your bladder.

Your catheter is connected to drainage tubing. This leads to a drainage bag. During the day, you may use a leg bag. It straps around your calf, as shown in the picture. This lets you move around more easily. You must empty the leg bag every three to four hours.

At night you will connect the catheter to a drainage bag called a night bag.

Guidelines for Caring for Your Catheter:

Use soap and warm water to wash yourself around the catheter. This will help keep the area from becoming irritated or infected. Rinse well, pat dry.

- Men may apply Vaseline to the tip of the penis. To prevent or relieve irritation of the skin surrounding the catheter.
- Never pull on your catheter for any reason.
- Do not disconnect tubing for any reason unless changing to a leg bag.
- The drainage bag should be changed when your catheter is changed. It should also be changed if the bag is odorous, discoloured or if it leaks.
- Drink between eight and ten 8-ounce glasses of fluid each day.
- Contact the doctor immediately if you have problems such as:
  ✓ urine leakage around the catheter
  ✓ pain and fullness in your bladder
  ✓ scanty urine flow
  ✓ blood or particles in your urine
  ✓ sign of infection, cloudy, smelly urine, fever and chills.

Note: For patients having a catheter longer than 6 weeks, always keep a spare foley catheter and drainage bag at hand. Your doctor will tell you how often your catheter should be changed and a nurse will assist you to do this.
Emptying the Leg Bag

Wash your hands with soap and water before and after handling the catheter.

To empty the leg bag:
- Open the clamp and drain out all the urine. If your doctor tells you, drain the urine into a measuring container, so you can record the amount. Otherwise drain the urine into the toilet and then close the clamp. Do not touch the drain port with your fingers or with the container.
- Empty the leg bag at least every three to four hours or more often as required.

Preparing for Bed

Before you go to bed, replace the leg bag with the larger night bag drainage system. This bag holds more urine. You won’t have to worry about emptying the drainage bag during the night.

To replace the leg bag:
- empty your leg bag
- disconnect the leg bag from the extension tubing
- connect the night drainage bag and tubing to the extension tube.

Decide which side of the bed that you want to hang the drainage bag from. Tape the drainage tubing to your thigh on that side. You may have to shave your skin in that area. Leave some slack in the line so that you won’t pull on the catheter when your move your leg.
You should tape the drainage tubing to the inner thigh, as shown in the picture.

After you have disconnected the leg bag, wash it in soap and water. Rinse the bag thoroughly with a solution of white vinegar and water. Use 1¼ cups of vinegar to 2 quarts of water. This will reduce urine odor.

Note: Hang the bag and tubing to dry. Often it is easy to clean the bag in an area with a large sink. Such as the laundry room or the bathtub.

When you get into bed, arrange the drainage tubing so that it doesn’t kink or loop. Place a bucket or large pan under the bag in case of leakage. Then hang the drainage bag inside the bucket. Be sure you keep the drainage bag below your bladder level at all times, whether you are lying down, sitting or standing up.

**In the Morning**

When you are ready to reconnect the leg bag in the morning, empty the night-bag system. Then repeat the steps you took when you connected the night-system bag last night. But this time, use the leg bag instead. Remember to empty the night bag before you disconnect it.

To clean the night-bag system, follow the cleaning instructions for the leg bag.

Note: You may get supplies at drug stores and medical equipment stores.