

Advice for patients discharged from A&E with a new urethral catheter

Accident and emergency

Patient information

What is a catheter?

Your doctor has advised that you need a catheter to help drain urine (pee) from your bladder.

A catheter is a thin, flexible tube that is gently inserted into your bladder through the urethra. This is the opening you normally pee from. It allows urine to drain into a collection bag, which is usually strapped to your leg.

When the bag is full, you will need to empty it using the tap at the bottom. Empty the bag over the toilet or into another suitable location.

A nurse or doctor will insert the catheter and explain why you need it. In many cases, it is only a temporary measure. At first, the catheter might feel strange or give you the urge to pee. This is completely normal and usually settles after a short time.

Once the catheter is in place, your nurse will provide further guidance and give you any spare equipment you might need. Your GP will also be informed, and you will be able to get additional supplies from your local pharmacy with a prescription.

If you experience any problems, your GP or district nurse can help.

How should I care for my catheter?

Keeping it clean

The catheter must be treated as a part of your own body and will need to be kept clean in the same way. Wash your catheter in the bath or shower with warm soapy water.

Always clean the catheter by wiping away from where it enters your body. This helps prevent bacteria from getting into the body and reduces the risk of infection.

While using a catheter:

Do

- ✓ drink plenty of fluids to help prevent infections and constipation
- ✓ avoid bending or kinking the catheter tube
- ✓ keep the drainage bag below the level of your bladder to allow proper urine flow.

Looking after your catheter and drainage system at home

While at home, you will need to care for the catheter and drainage system. There are several different parts:

1. The catheter

- No special care is needed except cleaning the outside with warm water and soap. Make sure to dry the area gently to avoid skin irritation.

2. The leg-bag (daytime use)

- This bag collects urine throughout the day. As it fills, it gets heavier. Do not let it become too full, as this could pull on the catheter.

To empty it:

- Wash your hands before and after.
- Open the tap at the bottom to drain the urine into the toilet.

3. Leg-bag support

- This works like a footless sock to keep the leg bag securely in place on your leg.

4. The G-strap

This Velcro strap helps hold the catheter in place, preventing it from pulling or moving around.

5. Night drainage bag

At night, attach a night drainage bag to your leg-bag without disconnecting the leg-bag. **Follow these steps:**

1. Remove the leg-bag support.
2. Wash your hands thoroughly.
3. Empty the leg bag, leave the tap open.
4. Push the night bag tubing into the tap's end.
This creates a direct path for urine to drain overnight.
5. Place the night bag in its stand on the floor beside your bed.

In the morning:

- Close the leg bag tap.
- Disconnect and empty the night bag.
- Rinse it with warm water and store it for reuse the next night.

Common catheter issues and what to do

Bladder spasms

These feel like stomach cramps and happen when your bladder tries to push out the catheter. Your GP can prescribe medicine to relieve this.

Leakage (bypassing)

Urine leaking around the catheter can happen due to spasms or when passing a bowel movement. If no urine is draining at all, contact your district nurse immediately.

Blood or debris in urine

It is normal to see small traces of blood or particles.

However, contact your nurse if you see large blood clots or solid pieces of debris.

Catheter blockage: this needs quick attention.

Check the following:

- Is the drainage bag lower than your bladder?
- Is the catheter tube kinked or twisted?
- Is there visible debris or clots?
- Are you drinking enough fluids?

If the catheter still will not drain, call your district nurse right away.

What should I do if the catheter falls out?

Contact your district nurse immediately.

Be aware: signs of infection

Call your GP if you have the following symptoms:

- Cloudy or foul-smelling urine
- Burning or stinging when urinating
- A high temperature or feeling unwell

These symptoms may mean you have a urinary tract infection (UTI) and could need antibiotics.

Your catheter

Type of catheter (Fr):	
Balloon size (ml):	
Date of insertion:	
Date for catheter change:	

Your leg and night bags should be changed only once a week unless there is a problem with one of them. After use, they can be rinsed out, put into a plastic bag and put out with household waste.

When can I get the catheter taken out?

You will be referred to the Trial Without Catheter Clinic (TWOC). They will contact you to arrange a day for you to attend.

At the clinic, a nurse will assess you before removing your catheter. You will then spend the day in the clinic to ensure you can pass urine adequately. If not, you may need the catheter to be reinserted. If further investigations are needed, the clinic staff will arrange these.

Further support

For general medical advice please use the NHS website, the **NHS 111** service, walk-in-centres, or your GP.

The NHS website provides online health information and guidance.

There are walk-in and urgent treatment services at Brighton Station, Crawley Urgent Treatment Centre, Lewes Victoria Hospital, Horsham Minor Injuries Unit and Bognor Regis War Memorial Hospital.

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