



STAYING HEALTHY AT HOME: Urinary Catheter Care

This is an educational guide to help you with the care and maintenance of your urinary catheter.

Why do I need to have a urinary catheter?

Urinary catheters assist with emptying the bladder of urine, when certain medical conditions make emptying the bladder more difficult. The urinary catheter has two parts, the catheter, which is the tube that is inserted into the bladder, and the drainage bag, which includes the clear tubing and the bag that collects the urine. The catheter allows the urine to drain into the drainage bag.

How do I take care of my urinary catheter?

Your nurse will talk with you about care of the catheter system before you go home. You will use the same equipment and precautions that were followed by the nursing staff in the hospital. Care of your catheter will focus on keeping bacteria from entering your bladder.

Drink at least 8 to 10 glasses of water every day. The water will help keep your urine at the correct acid level. This will lessen the chance for development of kidney stones and prevent bacterial growth.

Keep the drainage bag lower than your bladder and off the floor and keep the drainage spout closed.

Empty the drainage bag every 8 hours or more often if needed. This will prevent the weight of the urine from pulling on the tubing or damaging the seams of the drainage bag.

Your doctor will let you know if you should measure the amount of urine output every day.

Emptying the drainage bag

1. Wash your hands with soap and warm water.
2. When emptying the bag into the toilet:
 - a. Place some toilet paper in the toilet water to prevent splashing.
 - b. Hold the bottom of the drainage bag just below the toilet rim. Do not let any part of the drainage spout or bag touch the toilet or toilet water.
 - c. Open the drainage spout and the urine will empty from the bag.
 - d. Close the drainage spout when the bag is empty.

When emptying the bag into a separate container:

- a. Hold the drainage spout over the container.
 - b. Open the drainage spout and the urine will empty from the bag.
 - c. Close the drainage spout when the bag is empty.
 - d. Empty the urine into the toilet.
3. Flush the toilet.
 4. Wash your hands with soap and warm water.
 5. Record the amount of urine in the bag, if ordered by your doctor.

Cleaning the catheter

Your doctor will let you know if you may take a sponge bath or a shower. If you take a sponge bath, clean the catheter and surrounding skin gently with a washcloth, using soap and warm water. If you may take a shower, gently clean the catheter in the shower using soap and warm water. It is okay to get the drainage bag wet. Dry the bag with a towel when you are finished with the shower.

Cleaning the catheter bag

1. Prepare a bleach solution by using liquid bleach, such as Purex, Clorox or generic non-perfumed bleach containing 5.25% sodium hypochlorite. Fill an irrigating bottle with 150 ml. or 5 oz. of cold tap water and add 15ml or ½ oz. liquid bleach. Invert the bottle to mix well.
2. Wash your hands with soap and warm water; put on protective rubber, latex, vinyl or nitril gloves.
3. Disconnect the urine drainage bag from your catheter and put your other drainage bag onto your catheter. For example, in the morning take off your bed (large) bag, and connect your day (leg) bag, and then prepare to wash your nighttime bed bag.
4. Empty all urine from the bag into the toilet.
5. Fill the empty urine bag with 200 ml. or one pint (16 oz.) cold tap water from the top tubing. If it is a leg bag, fill it through its connector and extension tubing; if it is a bed bag, fill it through its top tubing.
6. Vigorously shake the water in the bag, and count to 10 slowly.
7. Repeat steps 3, 4, and 5. Rinsing must be done twice.
8. Use an irrigating bottle to squirt approximately 30 ml. or 1 oz. of the premixed bleach solution into the bag.
9. Swish the bleach solution around in the bag, while you slowly count to 30 making sure the bleach touches all inner surfaces of the bag.
10. Drain the bleach solution into the toilet.
11. Hang the bag on a bathroom hook and allow it to air dry until its next use.

What should I report to my doctor?

Call your doctor if you notice any of the following:

- Urine stops draining into the bag
- Increased bladder pain and/or burning
- Urine appears cloudy
- Urine has a bad odor
- Temperature above 101° F
- Chills
- Urine color darker than cranberry juice
- Urine with unexpected clots

Remember to keep all of your doctor's appointments!

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