

# Looking after your urinary catheter at home

1, 2, 3 healthy urine

Over 4, drink more



## Useful contacts to keep:

Name and role

Single point of access (SPA) for community nursing

Your GP

## What is a urinary catheter?

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A urinary catheter is a hollow, flexible tube that allows urine to drain from your bladder into a bag which may be attached to your leg. Some people may have a valve at the end of the catheter instead of a leg bag so that urine can be drained into another receptacle, such as the toilet bowl.

## Pain and discomfort

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Abdominal cramps can be experienced when a catheter is first inserted but usually settle within 24 hours.

If the pain continues for more than 24 hours, contact:

for advice (see front page for contact details).

## How do I look after my catheter?

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Your community nurse will advise you on how often your catheter needs changing and how to obtain further supplies of catheter equipment.

To care for your catheter on a daily basis:

- Empty the leg bag when it is two-thirds full of urine.
- If you have a valve attached to your catheter instead of a leg bag, your community nurse will advise you on how often to open the valve to empty your bladder.
- Replace the leg bag or valve once weekly.
- To help prevent infection, only disconnect the leg bag or valve weekly, when it is replaced with a new one.
- Attach a single-use night bag to the leg bag or valve every night, to prevent having to empty the bag overnight. Remember to open the valve from your leg bag or catheter valve, which is connected to the night bag.
- Close the leg bag or catheter valve and remove the night bag every morning.

- Empty the urine into the toilet and discard the single-use night bag.
- **If the catheter is pulled out by accident, contact your community nurse (see front page for contact details).**

## **Good personal hygiene helps to prevent infection**

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- Wash your hands before and after all procedures.
- Wash the skin in the area that the catheter enters the body, with mild soap and water at least twice a day.
- Men should carefully wash their penis and wash under their foreskin. Dry the area thoroughly.
- Women should always wash from front to back to prevent contamination from the back passage. Dry the area thoroughly.
- Avoid the use of talc, antiseptic, bubble bath or bath salts and creams. These can cause irritation.
- Do not remove your leg bag when you have a bath or shower.

## **How to dispose of your used catheter bags**

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- Empty the contents into the toilet.
- Double wrap the bag (either in a plastic bag or newspaper).
- Place into your household waste bin.

## What should my urine look like?

- Urine should be a light straw colour. If it is orange/dark brown, you may not be drinking sufficient fluid.
- You should be drinking approximately 1.5 to 2 litres (2.5 to 3.5 pints) in 24 hours. (10 cups or 6 mugs.)
- Avoid caffeine as this may irritate your bladder. Caffeine is in tea, coffee, coca cola and drinking chocolate. Try decaffeinated drinks.
- Some medication and foods may cause discolouration of urine. Your community nurse will be happy to discuss this with you.
- If your urine is bloodstained or has specks of blood in it, this may be because you have accidentally pulled on your catheter. **If you continue to pass bloodstained urine or urine with blood specks in, contact: Details can be found at the front of the leaflet.**
- If you are passing bright red blood you should contact your doctor as a matter of urgency.

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## Simple self-help measures if your catheter is not draining or it is leaking

- Check the drainage bag is below the level of the bladder (below the belly button), particularly when sitting in a low chair.
- Make sure that tubing is not twisted or restricted by tight clothing.
- Check that the drainage bag is connected correctly. Ensure that the straps, which secure the leg bag to your leg, are positioned behind the leg bag tube.
- **Urine will not drain if the bag is full. Empty the bag when it is two-thirds full.**
- Constipation can prevent your catheter from draining. Ask your community nurse about eating a healthy diet to avoid constipation.
- Change your position and walk around if possible.
- Make sure that you are drinking enough fluid. You should drink 1.5 to 2 litres (2.5 to 3.5 pints) in 24 hours. (10 cups or 6 mugs.)
- A small amount of urine leakage is not unusual as there is a gap between the catheter and the tube to your bladder (urethra). This is not an emergency if some urine is draining into the catheter bag.  
However, contact:   
to ask for advice.

Meanwhile, manage urinary leakage with incontinence pads; you are advised to purchase an emergency supply.

- Check that your catheter is draining well at 4pm each day to minimise the callout of the night nurses. If it is not draining, contact the day staff. Contact details can be found at the front of this leaflet.
- Ensure valve or leg bag tap is open when connected to night bag.

If you have tried all the above self-help measures and the problem is unresolved, contact:   
(details on front cover)

## What about sex?

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Sexual intercourse is possible if you take the following steps:

- Wash genitals before and after sexual intercourse.
- Men tape their catheter along the penis (using surgical tape) and apply a condom.
- Women can tape the catheter along their abdomen.

## When to ask for help

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Your catheter should remain comfortable and pain free.

However, you should ask for help when:

- You experience acute lower abdominal or stomach pain.
- Urine is not draining and you have followed the simple self-help measures on the checklist on page 5.
- The catheter falls out and you are unable to pass urine.
- The catheter falls out and you can pass urine, contact:  for advice during the hours of 8.30am - 4.30pm. This is not an emergency.
- There is blood in your urine.
- Urine is cloudy, smelly or you have a burning sensation, which does not improve after drinking extra fluids.
- Urine is leaking around the catheter, enough to make your clothing wet.

**If your GP prescribes antibiotics for a urine infection please inform your community nurse as soon as possible and prior to starting your treatment as your urinary catheter may require changing.**

## Catheter Supplies

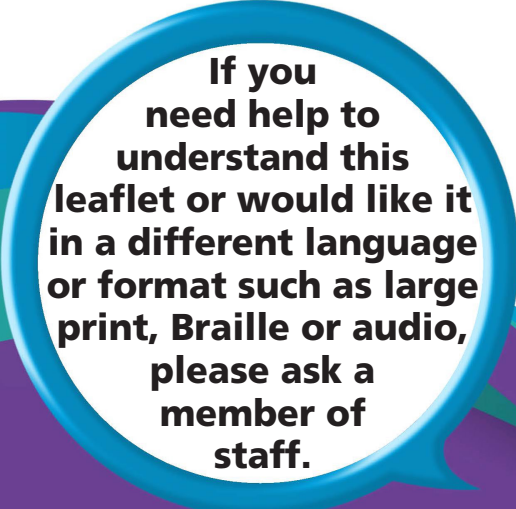
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You need to obtain your supply of catheters and accessories from:

## Carer's guide for using drainage leg bag pack

1. Wash and dry hands; apply non-sterile gloves and apron.
2. Check patient's documentation; prepare patient and area for leg bag change.
3. Empty existing leg bag and discard urine.
4. Remove non-sterile gloves.
5. Wash/decontaminate and dry hands.
6. Peel open drainage leg bag pack and place on firm surface.
7. Open sterile glove packing and apply one sterile glove without touching the outer surface of glove.
8. Using gloved hand; pick up second sterile glove by the edge and insert hand.
9. Position new leg bag ready for use **do not remove** protective cap.
10. Disconnect used leg bag from catheter.
11. Squeeze the end of the catheter with one hand to reduce urine leakage.
12. Remove protective cap from the new catheter with other hand and immediately connect the new leg bag to the catheter.
13. Ensure urine is flowing and make the patient comfortable.
14. Ensure the bag is firmly attached using the straps provided and G-strap if patient prefers one.
15. Discard equipment in the usual manner.
16. Remove and discard gloves and apron, wash and dry hands.
17. Document procedure in patient's notes.

If you require any further information please contact us on the telephone number on the front of this booklet or speak to your GP.



**If you  
need help to  
understand this  
leaflet or would like it  
in a different language  
or format such as large  
print, Braille or audio,  
please ask a  
member of  
staff.**

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