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Supra-pubic catheter

***Information for
patients and carers***

**NHS Grampian Bladder and Bowel
Specialist Service**

Introduction

What is this leaflet for?

This leaflet explains about supra-pubic catheters and how to care for them. We hope you find this leaflet useful.

If you have any questions about managing your catheter, please speak to your healthcare professional.

What is a supra-pubic catheter?

A supra-pubic catheter is where a catheter (a thin hollow flexible tube) is inserted into your bladder through an incision (cut) made in your abdomen just above the pubic bone (see diagram on page 3).

The catheter is inserted while you are in hospital. Urine drains from your bladder through the catheter. A small balloon near the tip of the catheter is inflated with sterile water to keep it in place.

How does the catheter empty my bladder?

There are two methods to allow emptying:

Drainage bag

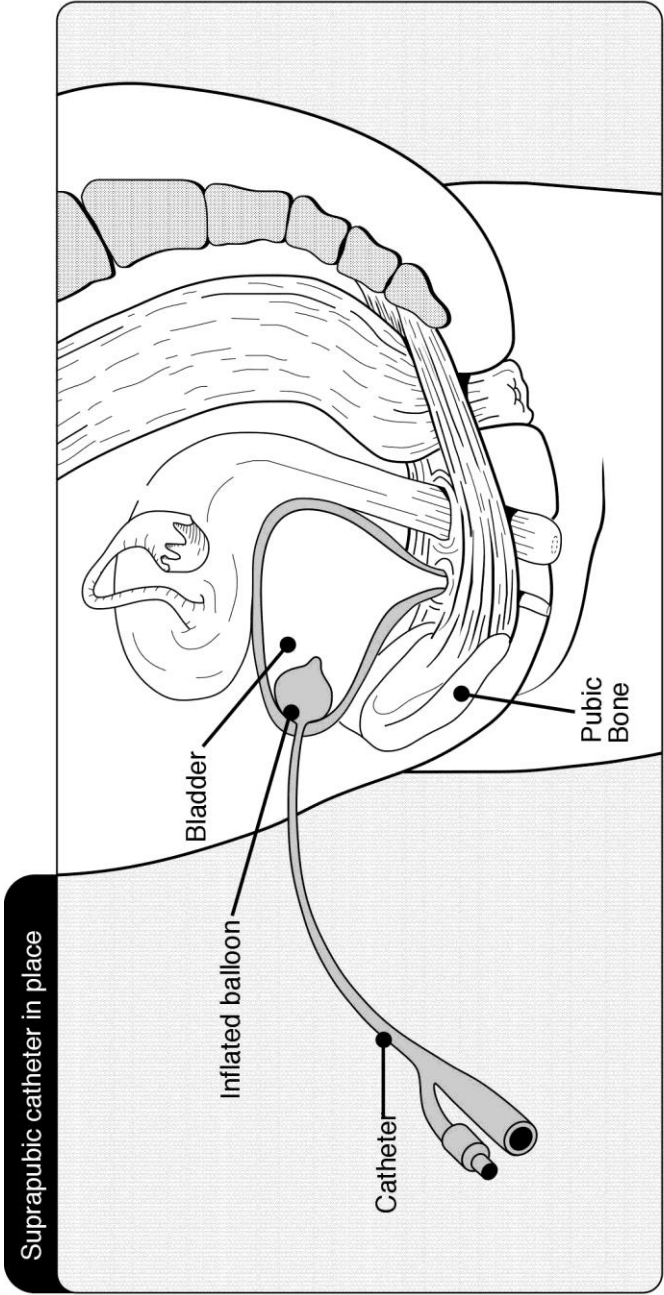
A drainage leg bag is attached to the end of the catheter tube. The bag is emptied regularly during the day. At night-time, a large drainage bag is usually attached on to the end of the leg bag. This is removed in the morning.

Catheter valve

A catheter valve (like a small tap) is attached to the end of the catheter tube. This allows you to empty your bladder regularly without having to wear a drainage bag during the day.

At night-time, a large drainage bag can be attached, which is removed in the morning.

Catheter valves aren't suitable for everyone; your healthcare professional can advise you on this.



(Diagram reproduced with the kind permission of Bard Medical)

When might I need a supra-pubic catheter?

There can be several reasons why you might need a supra-pubic catheter:

- It might be more comfortable than a catheter that's inserted into your urethra
- Can be easier to empty the leg bag
- There may be less risk of infection
- To allow bladder emptying
- After some surgical procedures
- Preferred choice for long-term use
- If urethral catheterisation is difficult (for example due to leg spasm)
- May be preferred by someone who is sexually active
- If a urethral catheter is pushed out frequently.

Who decides if a supra-pubic catheter is required?

Your general practitioner (GP) will refer you to a hospital doctor who will discuss if this is suitable for you. You might need a local or general anaesthetic for the procedure but your hospital doctor will discuss this with you.

Will the catheter stop me from doing things?

Having a catheter shouldn't restrict your social or leisure activities or stop you from going on holiday. It could be the start of having more freedom and improving your health.

Caring for your catheter

How often does the catheter need changed?

The life span of a catheter is 12 weeks, but some catheters need to be changed sooner. Your healthcare professional will discuss this with you. A doctor or nurse will change the catheter.

Looking after yourself and your catheter

Diet and fluids

Make sure you have a well-balanced diet and adequate fluids. This is very important in reducing the risk of infection, preventing constipation and avoiding catheter blockage.

Eat a well-balanced diet to help prevent constipation as a heavy, loaded bowel can press on the catheter and prevent your urine from draining. Aim to have regular bowel movements without having to strain. Your diet should consist of fresh fruit, vegetables, fibre and carbohydrates.

To make sure that your urine drains well, drink at least two litres (four pints) of fluid spaced evenly throughout the day. This can include diluting juices, decaffeinated tea or coffee. Please note that some people may need to avoid fluids that contain caffeine.

Exercise

Regular exercise such as walking will help to keep your urine draining freely.

Sexual activity

You can have sex with your supra-pubic catheter in place. You might want to tape your catheter on to your abdomen. Emptying your leg bag or using the catheter valve before having sex can make you more comfortable.

Personal care

Good personal care is very important to prevent infection.

- **Wash and dry your hands before doing anything that involves your catheter or drainage system.**
- Try to have a daily shower or bath; you can still keep your drainage bag on for this. Empty your drainage bag before your shower/bath (and use unperfumed shower gel/foam bath).
- Wash the area around where the catheter enters your body with warm water and dry thoroughly (your healthcare professional will show you how to do this).

- Don't use talcum powder, creams or antiseptic around the catheter site unless they have been prescribed for you in the area where your catheter is.
If there's any discharge from the area around the catheter, contact your healthcare professional, as you might need a small dressing.
- **Carers should wash and dry their hands, wear non-sterile disposable gloves and an apron before doing anything that involves a catheter** (for example emptying or changing your valve or drainage bag).

Storage of equipment

Keep your leg bags/night bags and catheter in their box, flat and away from heat and light in line with the manufacturer's instructions. Keep the packaging intact and the boxes closed until you need the equipment.

You get your catheters, leg bags, and night bags on prescription from the doctor/nurse. Some manufacturers also provide a home delivery service of bags to your home. Your healthcare professional will explain the details to you. You will need to take a spare catheter, supply of leg bags and night bags with you if you go on holiday.

Your doctor/nurse can provide a letter when going abroad on holiday to explain what the equipment is for.

Using the catheter with a drainage bag

Types of drainage bags

Daytime leg bag

This is usually worn on the leg (leg bag). It's only disconnected from the catheter when it's changed every five to seven days.

If you have a catheter valve, you don't need a daytime leg bag.

Night bags – single use

This is used with a daytime bag or with a catheter valve if necessary. It has extra capacity to store the urine you produce overnight.

How is the leg drainage bag attached?

The bag is attached to your calf or thigh by a pair of leg straps, a sleeve or a special securement device. Ask your healthcare professional for advice on which option would suit your needs. How you wear the leg bag depends on what feels comfortable for you.

The choice and size of the bag and the length of tubing depends on where you want to wear it and how much urine you produce. If you wear trousers, the long tube leg bag might be more convenient, as it's possible to roll up the bottom of your trouser leg to access the tap at the base of the bag for emptying urine. Short tube leg bags can be worn on the thigh and are discreet under skirts.

Emptying the leg drainage bag

You need to empty your bag regularly during the day. It's best to empty the bag when it is two thirds full. This will prevent the bag from pulling on your catheter and causing discomfort.

Wash and dry your hands before and after emptying this bag. When emptying the bag try to avoid the outlet tap touching the toilet or container.

- You might need to remove the straps/sleeve from the leg drainage bag before you empty it.
- Open the outlet taps on the bag over the toilet and allow the urine to drain.
- If you can't get to the toilet, empty the urine into a suitable container kept only for this purpose.
- Wash the container with soap and water and dry after each use.
- After emptying the bag, close the tap and wipe the outlet with a clean tissue or toilet paper and dispose of this in the toilet.

How do I change the leg drainage bag?

NHS Scotland (www.nhsinform.scot) recommends that leg bags are changed once a week. **Wash and dry your hands before and after changing your leg bag.** Avoid touching the end of the catheter or the connecting end of the new bag that goes into the catheter with your hands.

- Carefully remove the “old” bag to prevent urine escaping.
- Remove the protective cap from the leg bag and immediately insert the connecting end of the new bag into the catheter.

Other devices can be used; your healthcare professional will be able to advise you.

What is a night drainage bag?

This is a larger bag, which is attached to the bottom of the leg drainage bag. It can hold more urine so you don't need to get up during the night to empty the bag.

How do I use the night drainage bag?

After connecting the night bag to the bottom of the leg drainage bag, make sure that the tap on your leg drainage bag is in the open position to allow the urine to flow.

You can either loosen the straps of your leg drainage bag leaving it attached to your leg, or remove the leg drainage bag from your leg and lie the bag on the bed making sure it's lower than the level of your bladder.

Other devices can be used; your healthcare professional will be able to advise you.

How do I remove the night drainage bag?

This bag is connected to either the leg drainage bag or the catheter valve and is disposed of every morning.

Wash and dry your hands before and after emptying this bag. Bags for overnight drainage are for single use, so don't re-use them.

Use a stand for your night-bag to promote effective drainage and reduce the risk of infection.

- Close the tap on the leg drainage bag or catheter valve.
- Disconnect the night drainage bag from the leg drainage bag or catheter valve. Wipe the end of the tap with a clean tissue or toilet paper and dispose of this in the toilet.
- Empty the night drainage bag according to the manufacturer's instructions; dispose of the urine in the toilet.
- Dispose of the empty night drainage bag by double wrapping in either paper or plastic bags before placing into domestic waste.

Using a catheter valve

How do I drain my urine with a catheter valve?

This has the advantage of maintaining your bladder's ability to store more urine and is more discreet. You can open the valve whenever you feel the need to pass urine, but your healthcare professional will advise you on how often as this can vary from person to person.

- Wash and dry your hands before and after emptying the valve.
- Open the valve tap over the toilet or into a suitable container that's kept only for this purpose, and allow the urine to drain. Avoid allowing the valve to touch the toilet or container.
- After emptying the valve, close the tap and wipe the outlet with a clean tissue or toilet paper and dispose of this in the toilet.
- Wash the container with soap and water and dry after each use.

How do I use a night bag with a catheter valve?

If you have a catheter valve, connect your night bag to the outlet of the valve. Make sure the tap of the valve is in the open position to allow the urine to drain into the night bag. The night bag should be well-supported on a stand or hanger, not placed on the floor. You can get these from your healthcare professional.

How do I change my catheter valve?

NHS Scotland (www.nhsinform.scot) recommends that valves are changed once a week. It's important that the connection between the catheter and the valve remains unbroken except when the valve is changed.

Wash and dry your hands before and after changing your valve.

- Open the packaging of the valve to expose the outlet tap.
- Carefully remove the “old” valve to prevent urine from escaping.
- Remove the “new” valve from the packet by holding the outlet tap. Don't touch the end that goes into the catheter.
- Insert immediately into the catheter.
- Ensure the tap is in the closed position.
- Wipe any spillage around catheter end with tissue and dispose of tissue.

If you have any problems

When should I get help and advice?

If you have any of the following problems, please contact your healthcare professional for advice.

- Bladder spasm or cramp. This may cause urine leakage around the outside of the catheter (also known as bypassing).
- Difficulty in emptying/changing your drainage bags.
- Leg bag not staying in place securely (for example, slipping down your leg).
- Your urine is cloudy, smelly and you feel unwell.
- Urine is not draining and there is blood in your urine.
- Catheter pulling.
- No urine in your leg bag (see also next section).

If no urine is draining, what can I do before contacting the nurse or healthcare professional?

- Make sure that there are no kinks in the catheter or drainage tubing.
- Check the drainage bag is below the level of your bladder.
- Check the straps of the leg bag are **not** over the inlet valve at the top of the bag.
- Make sure that the catheter is not being pulled tight by the position of the leg bag. The use of a leg bag sleeve or strap or abdominal strap may help prevent this.
- Make sure you drink at least two litres (four pints) of fluid each day if possible.
- Walk around as this may help to relieve the blockage.
- **Please do not attempt to remove your catheter under any circumstances without any professional advice.**

Healthcare professional details

Name:

Contact number:

GP:

Telephone number:

Reason for catheterisation.....

Date of initial catheterisation.....

Equipment ordering details

Catheter details

Make and type:

Size: Balloon size:

Code for ordering:.....

Leg bags

Make:

Capacity: Tubing length:

Code for ordering:.....

Night bags

Make:

Code for ordering:.....

Valves

Make:

Code for ordering:.....

Sleeve

Make:

Code for ordering:..... Size:

Leg strap

Make:

Code for ordering:..... Size:

Abdominal strap

Make:

Code for ordering:..... Size:

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