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Your catheter

***Information for
patients and carers***

**NHS Grampian Bladder and Bowel
Specialist Service**

Healthcare professional details

Name:

Contact number:

GP:

Telephone number:

Reason for catheterisation:

Date of initial catheterisation:

<h2>Equipment ordering details</h2>

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:

Introduction

What is this leaflet for?

This leaflet explains about catheters and how to care for them. We hope you find this leaflet useful. If you have any questions about using your catheter, please speak to your healthcare professional.

What is a catheter?

A catheter is a thin, hollow flexible tube, which is inserted into your bladder. Urine drains from your bladder through the catheter.

How is a catheter inserted?

There are two ways of inserting the catheter into the bladder. Your doctor or healthcare professional will discuss this with you to decide which is better for you.

1. Through the urethra (see diagram on page 5), this is known as a urethral catheter.
2. Through the abdominal wall, below the navel (belly button) (see diagram on page 6); this is known as a supra-pubic catheter. There is another leaflet with more information (Supra-pubic catheter ID No: 0798).

A small balloon near the tip of the catheter is inflated with sterile water to keep it in place inside your bladder.

Why do I need a catheter?

Urine (water) is produced by the kidneys, passes down the two ureters (small tubes) and collects in the bladder (see diagrams on page 5). When the bladder is full, you feel an urge to pass urine.

When passing urine, urine should travel through the urethra, which is the tube from the bladder to the outside of the body. It's important to be able to empty your bladder regularly and completely. Sometimes this doesn't happen and a catheter needs to be inserted into the bladder to help drain the urine.

The most common reasons for using a catheter are:

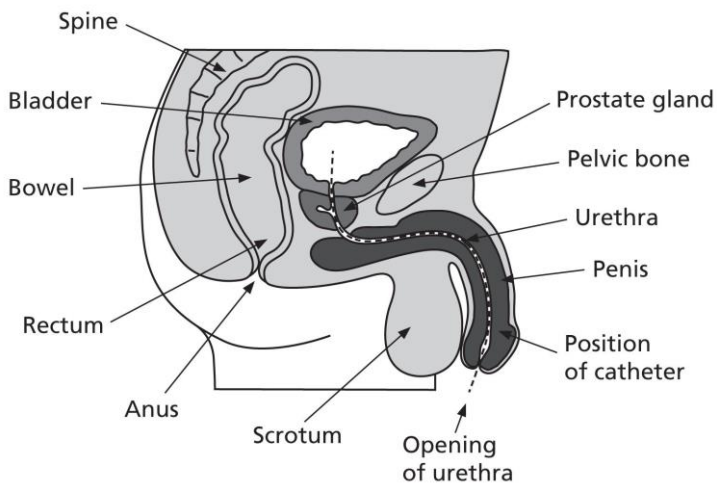
- Before surgery, especially on the bladder, prostate gland (in men only) or other part of the urinary system.
- If the flow of urine is obstructed.
- The bladder doesn't function as well as it did, because of a medical condition or injury.

Further information

Every person with an indwelling urinary catheter should have a Catheter Passport (indwelling means it stays in place for several weeks). The Catheter Passport is an NHS Scotland booklet, which gives further details on how to care for your catheter. You can find the passport at:

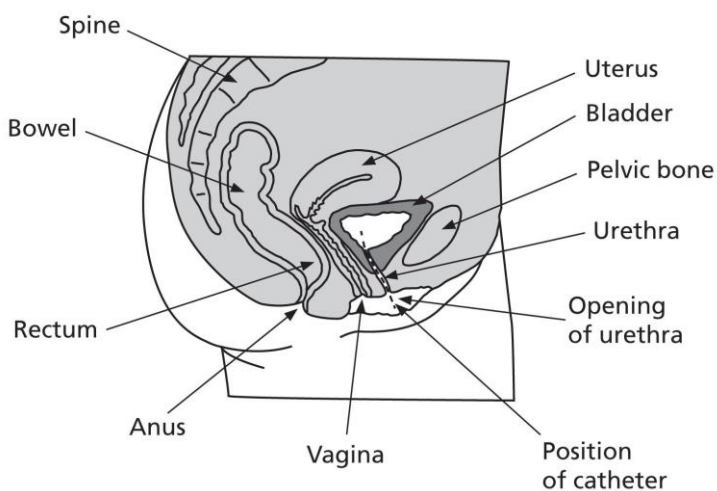
www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/web-resources-container/urinary-catheter-care-passport/

Male

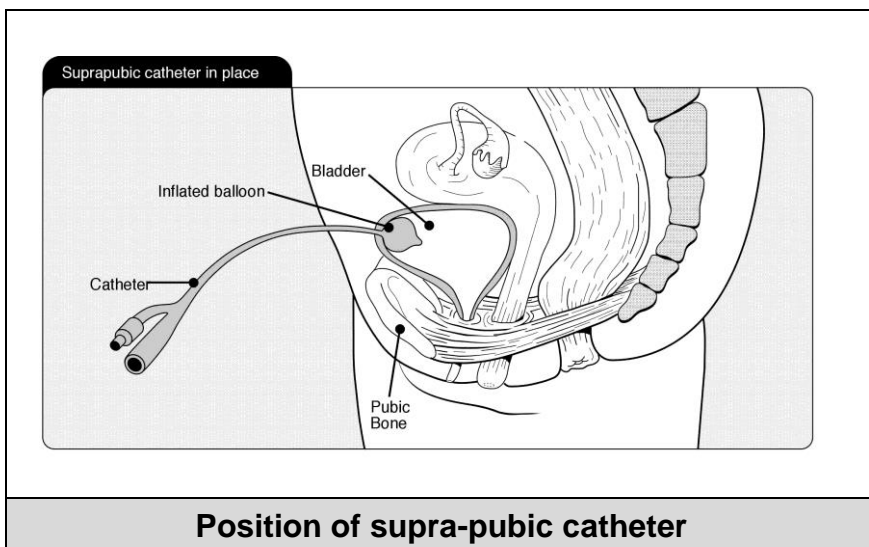


Position of male catheter

Female



Position of female catheter



How does the catheter empty my bladder?

There are two methods to allow emptying:

Drainage bag

A drainage 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. 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 wearing a daytime drainage bag. At night-time, you can attach a large drainage bag, which you remove in the morning (described on page 14).

Catheter valves aren't suitable for everyone. Your healthcare professional will advise you.

Will the catheter stop me from doing things?

Having a catheter shouldn't restrict your social and leisure activities or stop you from going on holiday, particularly if you are using a catheter valve. Some people find that having a catheter is the start of more freedom and improving their health.

Caring for your catheter

How often does the catheter need changed?

The lifespan of a catheter is 12 weeks, but some catheters need to be changed sooner. Your healthcare professional will discuss this with you. A nurse or doctor will change the catheter; some people do learn how to change their own.

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 loaded bowel may 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. Try to eat five portions of fruit and vegetables each day.

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.

Personal care

Good personal care is very important for preventing 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 shower/bath use (use unperfumed shower gel/foam bath).
- Wash the area around where the catheter enters your body with a clean cloth, warm water and unperfumed soap, then 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've 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.

- **Men:** carefully draw back your foreskin and wash the exposed skin. Replace the foreskin.
- **Women:** Wash from “front to back” to keep bacteria from the back passage away from your catheter.

Carers should wash and dry their hands, wear non-sterile disposable gloves and apron before doing anything that involves a catheter (for example emptying or changing a drainage bag).

What happens when I want to make love?

Please don't feel embarrassed to talk to your nurse or doctor if you have concerns about your catheter and sexual intercourse.

For women

Women with a urethral catheter can have penetrative sex by taping the catheter to their abdomen. A catheter valve may also be used instead of the catheter bag. To prevent pulling or friction on the catheter and vulva, use a soluble lubricant (such as KY jelly®). **Don't use petroleum jelly as it may react with the catheter material.**

For men

Tape the catheter along the length of penis and apply a condom. It's advisable for men to use a condom to reduce the risk of soreness developing.

For men and women

If you're sexually active, it may be worth considering the alternatives to a urethral catheter. These include performing intermittent self-catheterisation (where you catheterise yourself regularly) or having a supra-pubic catheter (which is inserted through your abdominal wall). These allow you more freedom around the genital area.

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 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 this service to you.

Holiday

You will need to take a spare catheter and a supply of leg bags and night bags with you if you go on holiday.

It's a good idea to pack some of your equipment in a bag to take on the plane as well as in your suitcase, in case your suitcase gets lost.

When you're going abroad on holiday, your doctor / nurse can give you a letter to explain what the equipment is for.

Using the catheter with a drainage bag

Types of drainage bags

Day time 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 day time leg bag.

Night bags – single use

This is used with a day time 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, fixation devices or a special holster. Ask your healthcare professional which option suits 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 may be more convenient, as you can roll up the bottom of the trouser leg and 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's no more than 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, you can 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 the leg bags are changed every 5 to 7 days. **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. Your nurse will provide a special stand to hold your night drainage bag off the floor.

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.

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.

- **Wash and dry your hands before and after emptying this bag.** 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. The valve can be opened whenever you feel the need to pass urine.

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. Make sure that the night bag is 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 every 5 to 7 days. 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 the 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 isn't draining and there is blood in your urine.
- Catheter pulling.
- No urine or very little urine is flowing into your leg or night drainage bag and you feel your bladder is full.
- You have new pain in your abdomen, pelvis, legs or back
- Urine leakage from urethra or around the catheter.

<p>If you do have a problem, don't wait until late in the afternoon to call.</p>

If no urine is draining, what can I do before contacting my healthcare professional?

- Make sure that there are no kinks in the catheter or drainage tubing.
- Check drainage bag is below the level of your bladder.
- Check the leg or night drainage bag is properly connected and doesn't need emptied.
- Check the straps of the leg bag **aren't over the inlet valve** at the top of the bag.
- Make sure that the catheter isn't 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.
- **Don't attempt to remove your catheter under any circumstances without professional advice.**

Important

Always remember to:	Possible signs of infection:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Wash and dry your hands before doing anything that involves your catheter or drainage bag.• Use a clean container for emptying the urine.• Maintain catheter hygiene.• Drink 2 litres (4 pints) each day.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fever• Lower abdominal pain• Lower backache• Nausea/vomiting• Tiredness• Confusion <p>If you have signs of infection, contact your healthcare professional.</p>

**This leaflet is also available in large print.
Other formats and languages can be
supplied on request. Please call Quality
Development on 01224 554149 for a copy.
Ask for leaflet 0874.**

Feedback from the public helped us to develop this leaflet.
If you have any comments on how we can improve it,
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