



Going Home with an Indwelling Catheter: Care and Tips

About Your Urinary Catheter

A urinary catheter is a thin tube that is put through your urethra into your bladder. This catheter drains urine from the bladder. At the tip of the catheter there is a small balloon that sits in your bladder and holds the catheter in place.

You will be contacted by home care and a nurse will help you manage your catheter at home or in the community.

When Does the Catheter Come Out?

The plan for your catheter is:

- ☐ Follow up with home care
- ☐ Follow up with urology clinic
- ☐ Follow up with your surgeon or their team
- ☐ Trial urination in the community-the home care nurse will take your catheter out when the doctor has requested and make sure that you are urinating on your own once the catheter is removed.

General Rules for Your Urinary Catheter

Always wash your hands before and after handling your catheter.

Watch the tubing for any kinks and ensure that the urine is draining freely. Avoid lying on or applying pressure to the tubing. Your urine drains according to gravity (downward) so make sure that the drainage bag is below the level of your bladder.

Secure the catheter to your leg to avoid any tugging or pulling on the catheter. Make sure that the catheter is secured so it does not pull when you walk.

Bathing/Hygiene

You cannot have a bath until the catheter is removed. You may have a sponge bath at the sink at home.

You can take a shower, however do not shower wearing the leg straps as they take too long to dry, and can cause skin problems if they rub against your skin.

If you have your menstrual period, you can use pads, or tampons depending on what you are comfortable with. Change the pad or tampon often and wash the area frequently, especially the area around the catheter, and with each pad or tampon change.

Activity

You cannot swim or use a hot tub.

You can do any activity that keeps the drainage bag below your bladder, unless you've been told otherwise by your doctor, nurses at the hospital, or home care nurse.

Cleaning Around Your Catheter

Cleaning around the catheter should be done once daily and when needed

1. Wash your hands with soap and water.
2. Using a clean washcloth with soap and water, wash your genital area from front to back, ensuring to clean carefully around the catheter and where it enters your body (your urethra).
3. Gently clean the tubing. Remove any drainage or blood from around the catheter.
4. Rinse and dry gently.
5. Secure the catheter with a securement device and change if it comes loose (check with your homecare nurse to see if they suggest using a securement device/tape at home).

Drainage Bags

You may have 2 bags:

A **small leg bag** that you can strap around your leg so you can move around more easily. This bag can be hidden under pants. You need to secure the straps to ensure it stays in place on your leg, but not too tight that it stops the flow of urine. Never go to sleep wearing a small leg bag.



A **larger bag or night bag** that you can attach to the side of your bed while sleeping. If you cannot attach it to your bed, put a clean plastic bag inside a waste basket and hang the large bag inside the waste basket. **It is very important that the bag is lower than your bladder.** The bag should not touch the floor.

To Empty the Small Leg Bag:

Empty the urine out of your bag when it is $\frac{1}{3}$ – $\frac{1}{2}$ full, or at least 2-3 times a day.

1. Wash your hands
2. Free the strap at the bottom of the leg bag
3. Position the bag over the toilet and remove the cap or turn the stopper until the urine flows freely out
4. **Do not touch the spout of the leg bag with your hands or the toilet**
5. Replace the cap or close the stopper securely and refasten the end of the leg bag to your leg
6. Wash your hands

Changing Bags

1. Wash your hands with soap and water
2. Drain the leg bag
3. Disconnect the leg bag from the catheter and set aside. Place the leg bag in a clean towel or clean bucket for night time storage.
4. Clean the end of the tubing from the large night bag with an alcohol swab, allow to dry, and attach to the catheter.
5. Wash your hands with soap and water.

Repeat steps 1-5 when changing back to the leg bag in the morning

Care of the Drainage Bag and Tubing

Wash and rinse the drainage bag and tubing once a week:

1. Wash your hands with soap and water.
2. Wash the bag in the sink or tub using warm water and dish soap.
3. Rinse the bag well, using warm running water.
4. The bag should be left to air dry with the clamp open on a clean towel.

Dry bags can be stored in a clean plastic bag or clean plastic bucket.

Damaged or cracked tubing or bags should be replaced.

What to Expect When Going Home With a Urinary Catheter

See the chart below for what to expect when you go home with a urinary catheter:

Routine	Concerning	Needs Attention
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clear to Yellow Urine• Slight pink-tinged urine• Whitish tissue in the drainage bag• Sudden pain and/or spasm that goes away	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Urine leaking around the catheter• Obvious decrease in the amount of urine in the bag• If your bladder feels full (and tubing is not kinked)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fever (over 37.8°C or 100°F) or chills/sweats• Blood in urine or blood clots• Pain that doesn't go away• Catheter accidentally comes out• No urine at all coming out of catheter

Who do I call when I have concerns or need attention?

Your home care provider will give you a number to call, they will help you determine a plan.

If you cannot reach your home care nurse and/or you feel like your situation needs immediate medical attention, please go to your nearest emergency room.

Telehealth Ontario is a free, confidential service you can call to get health advice or information from a Registered Nurse. They are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at Toll-free: 1-866-797-0000, Toll-free TTY: 1-866-797-0007.

If you are having difficulty caring for your catheter please contact your home care nurse, family physician for consideration of referral to Urology Clinic at UH/VH.

**If you feel you need urgent medical attention
please call 911 or present to your nearest
emergency room.**
