

Indwelling Catheter Care: Suprapubic and Urethral Catheters

A suprapubic catheter is a tube that drains urine from your bladder. It is inserted through a small hole in your lower abdomen and into your bladder. Suprapubic means that the catheter is inserted above your pubic bone. You may need a catheter because you have problems with urination because of a medical condition or surgery. A suprapubic catheter is also called an indwelling urinary catheter.

Why is catheter care important? To decrease your risks for infection.

The following can help prevent infection:

- **Care for your catheter as directed.** Follow directions on how to clean and care for the catheter, insertion site, and drainage bag. Keep the catheter drainage system closed. Keep the catheter tube secured to your leg so it will drain well.
- **Drink liquids as directed.** Ask how much liquid to drink each day and which liquids are best for you. Good choices for most people include water, juice, and milk. Coffee, soup, and fruit may be counted in your daily liquid amount.
- **Wash your hands often.** Always wash with soap and water before and after you touch your catheter, tubing, or drainage bag. This will help stop germs from getting into your catheter. Remind anyone who cares for your catheter or drainage system to wash his or her hands.
- **Shower or bathe daily.**

How do I care for my drainage bag?

- **Always wash your hands before and after** you touch the catheter or the insertion site. Wear clean medical gloves when you care for your catheter.
- **Position the drainage bag and tubing:**
 - **Allow gravity drainage.** Do not loop or kink the tubing so urine can flow into the bag.
 - **Position the drainage bag properly.** Keep the drainage bag below the level of your waist. This helps stop urine from moving back up the tubing and into your bladder.
 - **Keep the bag clean.**
- **Empty the drainage bag when needed.** The weight of a full drainage bag can pull on the catheter and cause pain. Empty the drainage bag every 3 to 6 hours or when it is $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{2}{3}$ full.
 - Place a large container on the floor next to your chair. You may also hold the urine bag over the toilet.
 - Remove the drain spout from its sleeve at the bottom of the urine bag. Do not touch the tip. Open the slide valve on the spout.
 - Let the urine flow out of the urine bag into the container or toilet. Do not let the drainage tube touch anything.
 - Close the slide valve and put the drain spout into its sleeve at the bottom of the urine bag. Write down how much urine was in your bag **ONLY** if your healthcare provider has asked you to keep a record.
- **Clean and change the drainage bag.** You may clean the bag at least weekly with either soapy water or a solution with tap water and vinegar at a concentration of three to one. Put the solution in the drainage bag and allow to sit for 20 minutes then drain. You may keep your catheter plugged during this time if you have a catheter plug, but you may also allow urine to drain into the solution.

What else do I need to know?

- **Wash your genital area and the insertion site with soap and water at least daily.** Wash your anal area with soap and water after each bowel movement.
- **When you are in the shower or bath, clean the tubing with soap and water and rinse well.**
- **You may need to use the larger drainage bag at night.** A leg bag can be used during the day. A leg bag usually fits under clothing.
- **When you have an indwelling catheter, you will likely become colonized with bacteria.** You only need to have the bacteria in your urine treated when you are symptomatic in some way.

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When should I call my doctor?

- You have a fever.
- You have changes in how your urine looks or smells, or you have blood in your urine.
- You have an overgrowth of skin at the insertion site that is getting larger.
- The closed drainage system has sprung a leak.
- Your catheter keeps getting blocked.
- There is no urine draining into the drainage bag.
- The catheter comes out.
- Your insertion site is red, smells bad, or has green or yellow discharge.
- You have questions or concerns about how to care for your catheter.