

## Indwelling Urinary Catheter

An indwelling urinary catheter is a thin tube that drains urine from the bladder. The urine flows from the catheter into a drainage bag.

*If you have any questions, please ask your physician or nurse.*

This brochure will explain the urinary system and how to care for your indwelling urinary catheter at home

### Urinary system

To understand how the urinary catheter works, it helps to know about the urinary system (Figure 1).

The urinary system's main purpose is to remove urinary waste from the body. Urine is made in the kidneys, moves through the ureters and is stored in the bladder until you urinate.

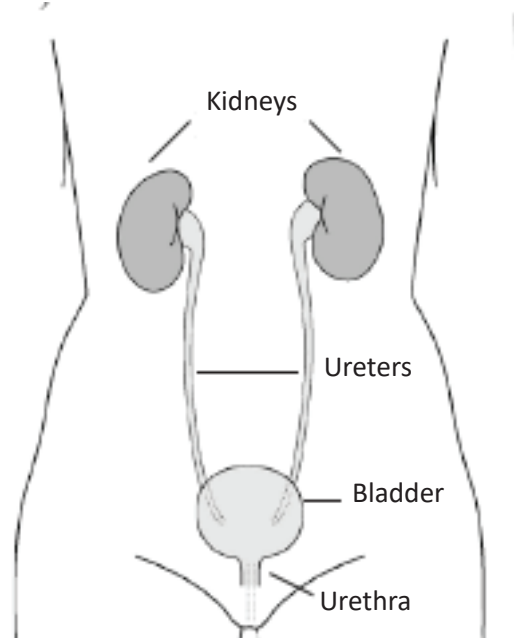
The indwelling catheter is a soft, flexible tube that is passed through the urethra into the bladder. A small balloon on the catheter holds it in place inside the bladder. The other end of the catheter is connected to collection bag outside your body.

The urine is no longer stored in the bladder and flows continuously into the collection bag.

There are 2 types of collection bags: a drainage bag (or night bag) and a leg bag. You can use the smaller leg bag when you are walking or sitting. You can use the larger drainage bag all the time or when you are sleeping or lying flat.

To prevent infection, always wash your hands before and after handling the catheter. You will need to clean the area around the catheter at least 1 time a day (for women, after every bowel movement). This will help prevent germs from going into your bladder.

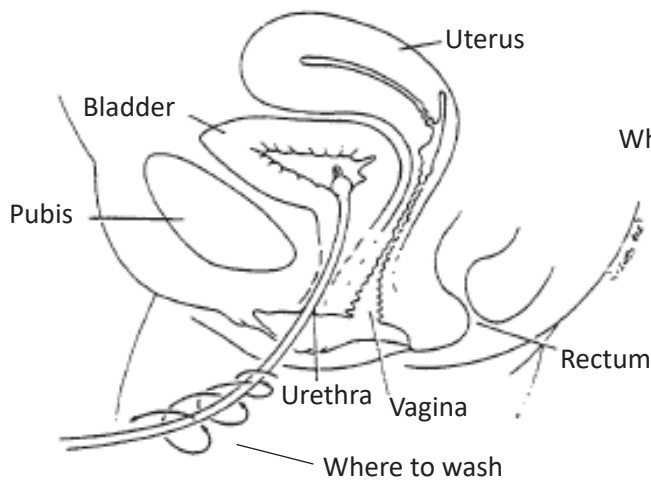
**Figure 1. Urinary system**



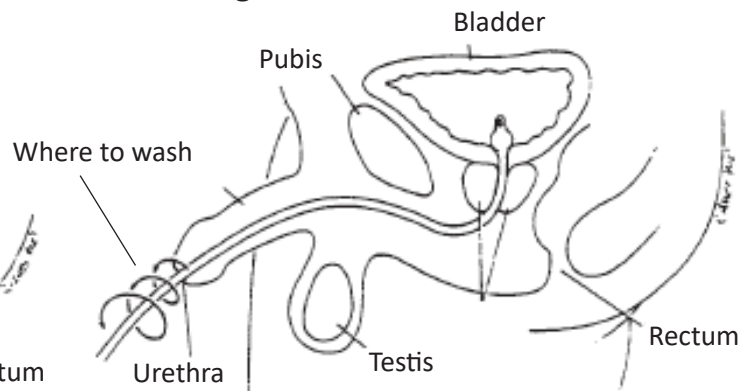
## How to care for your indwelling catheter

1. Wash your hands well with soap and water.
2. Clean the area where the catheter enters your body with a washcloth and mild soap and water. Rinse the soap off with water.
3. Clean the catheter. Use a washcloth and the soap and water. Start where the catheter leaves your body and wash along the outside of the catheter (moving away from your body) for 3 to 4 inches (Figures 2 and 3).
4. Secure the catheter to the outside of your thigh with tape or a catheter-holding device. Allow enough slack so that the catheter will not pull when you move your leg.

**Figure 2. Female with catheter**



**Figure 3. Male with catheter**



You may notice dried crusts around the outside of the catheter. Gently wipe them with a wet washcloth to remove them.

Do not use alcohol on the area where the catheter enters the body or on the tip of the penis; it will be very drying to the skin and can cause irritation. If the crusts are hard to remove, pour 1 ounce of hydrogen peroxide over them. Let the peroxide soak in for about a minute. Rinse and wash with soap and water.

After each bowel movement, wipe the anal area from front to back, away from the catheter. Women should also clean the catheter with mild soap and water after each bowel movement.

To prevent infection, each time you separate or reconnect the catheter from the drainage bag system:

- Wash your hands well with soap and water.
- Clean the end of the catheter and the end of the drainage tube with a cotton ball soaked in 70% rubbing alcohol or an alcohol swab.

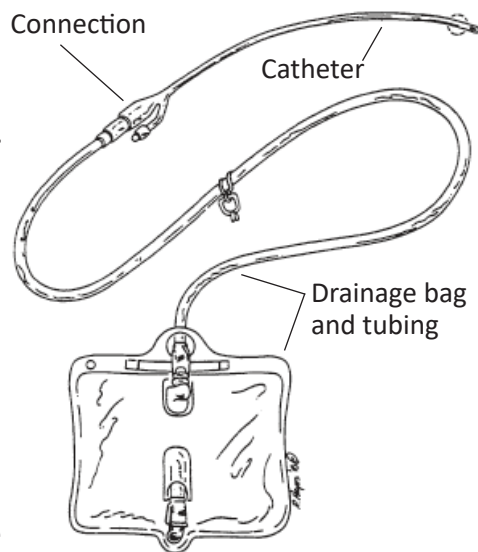
## Collection devices

Replace the drainage bag (Figure 4) with a new bag each time the catheter is changed.

**Figure 4. Catheter and drainage bag system**

### ***How to change from a drainage bag to a leg bag***

1. Wash your hands well with soap and water.
2. Attach the upper strap of the leg bag to your leg.
3. Clean the connection between the catheter and the drainage bag with an alcohol swab.
4. Hold the catheter with one hand. Grasp the tubing with your opposite hand. Work the connection loose by using your thumb to push up on the end of the catheter.
5. Pinch the catheter closed and pull the drainage bag tubing out.
6. Clean the end of the catheter and the end of the leg bag tubing with alcohol. Insert the leg bag tubing into the catheter.
7. Attach the second strap of the leg bag to your leg.
8. Empty the drainage bag and rinse it with cool water.



### ***How to change from a leg bag to a drainage bag***

1. Wash your hands well with soap and water.
2. Clean the connection between the catheter and the leg bag with an alcohol swab.
3. Hold the catheter with 1 hand. Hold the tubing with your other hand. Work the connection loose by using your thumb to push up on the end of the catheter.
4. Pinch the catheter closed and pull the leg bag tubing out.
5. Clean the end of the catheter and the end of the drainage bag tubing with alcohol. Insert the drainage bag tubing into the catheter.
6. Empty the leg bag and rinse it with cool water.

## Special instructions

- Wear the larger drainage bag when lying down at night. Never go to bed with the leg bag on. Urine could backflow into your bladder if the bag fills up.
- If you take a nap, empty the leg bag before lying down.
- Make sure the urine flows freely down and away from your body. Always keep the leg or drainage bag, and drainage tube below the level of your bladder.
- Do not place the drainage bag directly on the floor as that may stop the urine from flowing well and cause infection.
- Do not lie on the tubing. Make sure it is not kinked.

- Empty the bag when it is 3/4 full. This will help prevent the pressure from backing urine up into the tube, which can cause an infection.
- Keep everything clean.
- If your physician lets you use a leg bag during the day, you must rinse the drainage bag and the tubing you took off.
  - Remove the drainage bag and rinse it out with cold water.
  - If you have had a urinary catheter longer than 2 weeks and you are using both a drainage bag and a leg bag:
    - 1 time a day, fill the bag with a solution of 1 part vinegar to 3 parts water after the cold water rinse.
    - Keep the solution in the bag for 15 to 20 minutes, then let it drain out.
  - After cleaning the drainage bag, hang the bag in the shower with the spout open to dry out between uses.
- Throw drainage bags away when they are damaged or when you can no longer get rid of odors with cleaning. You can use most leg bags for 1 month.

## Fluid intake

Your physician may want you to drink more liquids every day. Drinking extra liquids helps keep your urine flowing freely and prevents your catheter from becoming clogged. Unless you are told otherwise, try to drink a small glass of liquid every hour while you are awake. Other tips include:

- Try room temperature liquids; they may be easier to drink.
- If you have no diet restrictions, alternate sweet, salty, warm and cold liquids so that you do not get bored with the same taste.
- Include more liquids at meal times.
- Remember, liquid means anything wet. This includes water, tea, coffee and carbonated beverages, as well as milk, ice cream and sherbet.
- Avoid milk products if calcification in the tubing is a problem. Calcification is a gravel or sand-like buildup inside the catheter wall. You can find it by rolling or squeezing the catheter between your fingers.
- If you have diabetes, remember that some liquids contain carbohydrates and calories, so they should be counted in your meal plan.

## When to call the physician

Contact your physician if your catheter comes out or if you have any of the symptoms listed below:

- Temperature more than 101 degrees F
- Chills
- Pain spreading from your back to your side
- Bloody or tea- or cola-colored urine

- Cloudy urine with stringy pieces or clumps
- No urine output for 2 to 3 hours
- Burning, itching or leaking of urine around the catheter
- Change in the usual odor of urine
- Nausea and vomiting

### Questions for your physician

- Can I bathe in a tub or go swimming?
- Where can I get more equipment?
- Will my catheter need to be changed and who will change my catheter?
- When will my catheter be taken out?

Please talk with your physician or nurse if you have any other questions or concerns.

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Contact person: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Physician's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Office number: \_\_\_\_\_