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## Intermittent Self-Catheterization – (Female)

Your doctor has ordered intermittent self-catheterization. A catheter is a flexible hollow tube that you insert into your bladder to drain your urine. It is very important for you to catheterize yourself on schedule and use a new catheter each time. This helps prevent a urinary tract infection and loss of bladder control (incontinence).

**You are to drain your bladder with the catheter every \_\_\_\_\_ hours.**

### Supplies

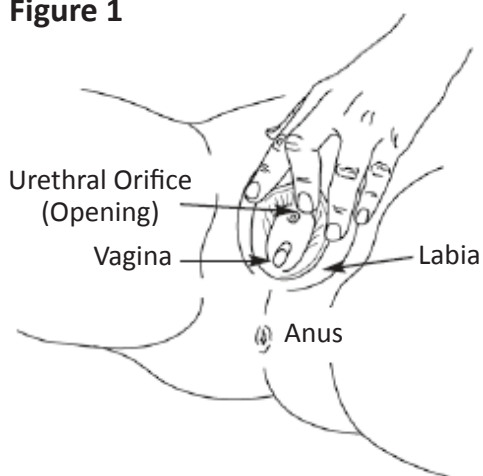
A doctor's prescription is needed to purchase catheters. You can buy them at any medical supply store. For self-catheterization, you will need:

- Catheter
- Water-soluble lubricant, such as K-Y Jelly®. (Do **not** use Vaseline®.)

### Preparation and Procedure

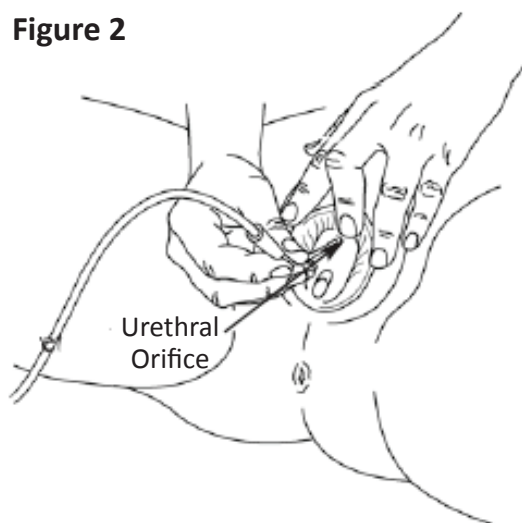
1. Wash your hands with soap and water, a towelette or waterless hand cleaner.
2. Spread the labia apart. Wash the area around the urinary opening (urethral orifice) with soap and water or a moist towelette, such as baby wipes. Be sure to wipe from front to back.
3. Place a generous amount of water-soluble lubricant along the tip of the catheter.
4. If you are right handed, use the 2nd and 4th finger of your left hand to hold your labia apart (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1**



5. Locate the urinary opening with the 3rd finger of your left hand.
6. With your right hand, hold the catheter about 1 inch from the tip. Direct the catheter slightly upward toward the navel (belly button). Continue to insert the catheter gently until urine begins to flow (see Figure 2).

**Figure 2**



7. Allow the urine to drain until the urine flow stops.
8. Remove the catheter slowly. Stop whenever urine flows and allow it to drain. Continue to remove the catheter slowly.
9. Pinch the catheter just before removing it completely, to avoid leaking urine from the tube.
10. Wash your hands with soap and water, a towelette or waterless hand cleaner.

## Helpful Hints

- You may catheterize while standing, sitting, squatting or lying on your back in your own home. It is important to learn to catheterize yourself while standing in case you need to use a public restroom or one is unavailable (for example, while camping).
- For the first time, use a mirror to find the location of the urinary opening. Once you are comfortable with the procedure, practice and learn to catheterize yourself without a mirror so that you do not become dependent on using one.
- If you cannot easily insert the catheter and you become nervous, stop and take a deep breath. Then start over. It is normal to have difficulty the first few times.
- Do not force the catheter at any time.
- Ask your doctor how much water or other fluids you should drink each day.
- Always carry antiseptic towelettes to cleanse your hands in case water is not available.

## When to Call the Doctor

Your doctor may prescribe an antibiotic to reduce the risk of infection. If you notice any of the following, contact your doctor as soon as possible.

- Unusually cloudy, foul-smelling or blood-tinged urine
- Pain over the bladder area (lower abdomen)
- Temperature higher than 101.5 °F
- Chills
- Leaking urine in between catheterizations

Your doctor or Advance Practice Nurse: \_\_\_\_\_

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

## Northwestern Medicine – Health Information Resources

For more information, contact Northwestern Memorial Hospital’s Alberto Culver Health Learning Center (HLC) at [hlc@nm.org](mailto:hlc@nm.org), or by calling 312.926.5465. Health information professionals can help you find the information you need and provide you with personal support at no charge.

For more information about Northwestern Medicine, please visit our website at [nm.org](http://nm.org).

*Para asistencia en español, por favor llamar al Departamento de Representantes para Pacientes al 312.926.3112.*

The entities that come together as Northwestern Medicine are committed to representing the communities we serve, fostering a culture of inclusion, delivering culturally competent care, providing access to treatment and programs in a nondiscriminatory manner and eliminating healthcare disparities. For questions, please call either Northwestern Memorial Hospital’s Patient Representatives Department at 312.926.3112, TDD/TTY 312.926.6363 or the Northwestern Medical Group Patient Representatives Department at 312.695.1100, TDD/TTY 312.926.6363.

Developed by: NMH Center for Urology and Urology Nursing