Self Catheterization, Males & Females

You are having trouble emptying your urinary bladder. Until a lasting solution can be found, you can empty your bladder by using a catheter. A catheter is a long, narrow, hollow tube that you pass into your bladder. It empties into a drainage bag, which you then empty into the toilet. You must use excellent technique to reduce the risk of infection. Your catheter requires daily care to reduce the risk of infection.

In some cases, the catheter stays in the bladder rather than being put in periodically. This is called a Foley Catheter.

Your caregiver or special nurses should teach you how to insert the catheter. Be sure you understand their instructions thoroughly. You should practice the procedure with your instructor or caregiver present the first few times. Your caregiver will also instruct you on how often to insert the catheter. They will also tell you how long to leave it in before removing it.

The main risk with catheterization is infection. This document will help you prevent infection.

Reduce the risk of infection by:

- Following good cleaning methods when using and changing catheters.
- Being gentle to avoid injury.
- Keeping the catheter open (avoid kinking, etc.)

In most cases, using preventative (*prophylactic*) medications which kill germs (*antibiotics*) will not prevent infections.

FOLLOW THESE PROCEDURES TO LIMIT BACTERIA ENTERING THE BLADDER:

- Wash your hands for two minutes with soapy water before and after touching the catheter.
- Wash your bottom and the length of the catheter twice daily and after bowel movements. Wash the opening into the bladder, (which is the end of the penis in males and the area where urine exits the body in females). Wash with soap and warm water, then rinse. Also wash the rectal area. Always wash from front to back. This keeps the catheter from coming into contact with material from around the rectum.
- If your catheter stays in overnight, clean the end of the catheter where it connects to the tubing by cleaning the connection with an alcohol wipe.
- Clean leg bags and night drainage bags daily after use. Replace your drainage bags weekly or when you can no longer thoroughly clean them.
- Always keep the tubing and collection bag below the level of your bladder. This allows urine to drain properly. Lifting the bag or tubing above the level of your bladder will cause urine to flow back into your bladder. This can cause infections. If you must quickly lift the bag higher than your bladder, pinch the catheter or tubing to prevent back-flow.
- Drink at least 6 to 8 glasses of water daily (or as told by your caregiver) to flush germs (*bacteria*) out of the bladder.

PROTECT TISSUES FROM INJURY BY FOLLOWING THESE PROCEDURES:

- If your catheter stays in for a period of time, tape or fasten your catheter to yourself or your undergarments to prevent pulling. Pulling could damage internal tissues. **Do not** pull the catheter tight when fastening it.
- Place your leg bag on your lower leg, fastening the straps securely, but not so tightly that the straps cause pressure or interfere with blood return.
- Use lubricants as instructed when inserting the catheter.

KEEP THE URINARY PATHWAY OPEN

- Check your catheter many times while awake. Make sure the catheter is open and urine is draining well. **Do not** allow the tubing to become kinked. **Do not** allow the drainage bag to overfill.

- If there is leaking around the catheter or if you have lower belly (*abdominal*) pain or fever, you should be seen by a caregiver.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- Your urine changes color or develops a bad odor.
- The catheter site becomes red or irritated.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You are unable to insert your catheter. **Do not** try repeatedly. This could injure your tissue.
- You are not passing urine at all.
- You develop severe belly pain.
- You develop chills or fever.
- You develop bleeding around the tube.
- Your catheter does not seem to be draining properly and you are starting to feel uncomfortable.

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