

How to Prevent an Infection From Your Urinary (Foley) Catheter

Urinary Catheter

Your health care provider has placed a urinary (Foley) catheter in your bladder.

A catheter is a thin tube that has a water-filled balloon on the end of the tube. It is gently inserted through your urethra and into your bladder. Urine drains through the tube into the collection bag.

You may receive a urinary catheter:

- if you can't urinate on your own
- to frequently measure the amount of urine that you make
- during and after certain procedures
- if you need to stay in bed and can't use a bedside commode
- during some tests of the kidneys and bladder.

Your health care provider will remove the catheter as soon as possible to reduce your risk of infection. Having a catheter in for comfort is not an acceptable reason to keep it in. It puts you at risk for falling and getting an infection.

Catheter-associated Urinary Tract Infections

You can get a urinary tract infection from the catheter. Germs can travel along the catheter and cause an infection in your bladder (which stores the urine) or your kidney (which filters the blood to make urine). This is known as a catheter-associated urinary tract infection.

This can happen while the catheter is being put in or while the catheter remains in the bladder. Many of the germs that cause a catheter-associated urinary tract infection are common germs found in your intestines although the germs don't usually cause an infection there.

How to Prevent an Infection

A Foley catheter is put in only when needed. It should be removed as soon as possible.

Here is what you can do to prevent a catheter-associated urinary tract infection:

- Ask your health care provider each day if you still need your catheter or if you have other options.
- Make sure your catheter tubing is secured to your leg, if possible.
- Make sure all hospital staff members clean their hands before and after touching your catheter.
- Do not tug, pull or twist the catheter tubing.

(over)

- Always keep your urine drain bag below the level of your bladder or hips.
- Always keep your urine drain bag off the floor.
- Ask that your urine bag is emptied before you get out of bed to walk or move to the chair.
- Your nurse or nursing assistant will care for your catheter to keep the insertion site clean and prevent bacteria (germs) from growing on your catheter.
 - You may also receive directions on how you can help care for the catheter.
- Don't disconnect the catheter from the drain tube.

What Happens When the Catheter is Taken Out

Your nurse or doctor will ask you about the first time you empty your bladder to check if you have any urine left in your bladder.

If you aren't fully emptying your bladder, a nurse may scan your bladder to see how full it is. Your nurse may also empty your bladder with a catheter that will be removed right after your bladder is emptied.

Tell your nurse if you feel fullness in your bladder or if you have any pain.

Symptoms of a Urinary Tract Infection

Call your doctor or nurse right away if you have any of these symptoms:

- burning or pain in the lower abdomen (below your stomach)
- fever higher than 100.8 F
- bloody urine
- burning when you urinate or an increased need to urinate after the catheter is removed.

Treating a Catheter-associated Urinary Tract Infection

Most infections can be treated with antibiotics (medicine), or removing or changing the catheter.

Your doctor will decide which treatment is right for you.

Whom to Ask With Questions

If you have questions about how to care for your Foley catheter, especially if you will go home with it, ask your doctor or nurse.