

How to Care for a Urinary (Foley) Catheter

General Information

Your health care provider is sending you home from the hospital with a urinary (Foley) catheter. This is a thin tube that has a water filled balloon on the end. The end of the tube is gently inserted through your urethra and into your bladder.

Your health care provider will tell you how long you need to have this catheter.

You will need to clean the catheter each day. You can reduce the risk of infection if you:

- limit the bacteria (germs) that enter your bladder
- protect your skin and tissue from injury
- keep your urine path open.

How to Limit the Bacteria (Germs)

- Wash your hands with soap and water before and after caring for the catheter.
- Wash the area between your genitals and your anus twice each day and after each bowel movement.
- Wash around your urinary opening and along the outside of catheter with a mild soap and warm water at least twice a day. Rinse each and wash your rectal area. Always wash from the front to back.
- Replace your drainage bags each month or when the tubes get clogged. When you change the drainage bags, clean the end of the catheter (where it connects to the tubing) with an alcohol wipe.

- Always keep the tubing and drainage bag at or below the level of your bladder. This will let the urine drain naturally. The bag has a special valve that keeps your urine from draining back into the tubing and your bladder.
- Drink at least 6 to 8 glasses of water each day to flush germs out of your bladder.

How to Protect Your Skin and Tissue

- Tape or strap the catheter to your thigh. This will keep the catheter from getting pulled. Do not pull the catheter tight when you tape it to your leg.
- Secure the straps when you wear the drainage bag on your leg. Make sure the straps are not too tight so you get skin or circulation problems.

How to Keep Your Urine Path Open

- Check the catheter during the day to make sure it is open and your urine is draining into the bag. Make sure the tubing doesn't get kinked. Empty your leg bag when it is one-half to three-fourths full.
- If you see urine leaking around the catheter or if there is no urine from the catheter, check to see if the tube is kinked. Be sure the bag and tube are located below the level of your bladder.

(over)

How to Change a Night Bag

Your health care provider may want you to change from a leg bag to a straight drainage bag at night. The straight drainage bag is bigger so you do not have to get out of bed to empty it at night.

Your nurse will show you how to change from a leg bag to a night bag at the hospital.

- Make sure the straight drainage bag is at the same level or lower than your bladder.
- The bag must not be kinked.
- You will be able to wear a leg bag in the morning.

When to Call Your Health Care Provider

Call your health care provider if:

- the catheter accidentally comes out and you do not urinate
- no urine has drained from the catheter in 6 to 8 hours
- there is a urine leaking around the catheter
- you have a temperature of more than 100 F by mouth
- your urine is bloody with clots
- your urine is cloudy, thick or has mucus
- your urine has a strong smell
- you have pain in your urethra, bladder, abdomen or back.