

Catheter Care at Home

Patient Information – Urology Service

What is a catheter?

A catheter is a fine tube placed into your bladder to drain urine.

Your doctor or nurse will have explained to you why you have a catheter in place. It may be due to an inability to pass urine, to allow healing after surgery, or sometimes for other reasons.

Your catheter has been introduced into your bladder via the urethra (tube from the bladder that empties urine) or directly into your abdomen (in this case it is known as a suprapubic catheter).

The catheter is held in place by a balloon filled with water that sits inside the bladder. The catheter will not fall out in normal use.

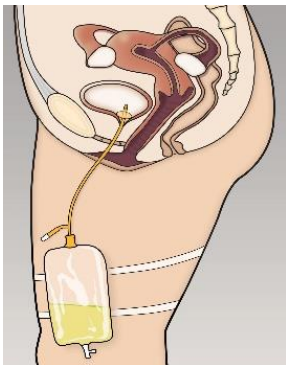
Most catheters can be left in place for up to three months. Your doctor or nurse will tell you when your catheter is due to be changed.

Never try to remove the catheter without medical or nursing advice. You may hurt yourself.

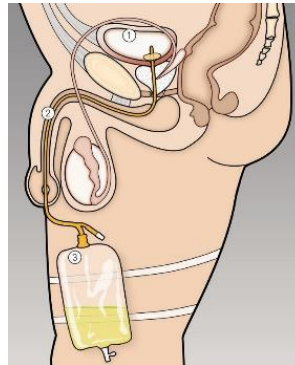
Leg bag

The catheter is attached to a drainage bag, or leg bag. Urine drains directly into this bag.

A) Side view of a woman with a catheter



B) Side view of man with a catheter



- The leg bag is worn during the day and is held in place with leg straps.
- The tubing may come in two lengths so that it can be worn on your calf or on your thigh.
- The leg bag is to be worn at all times and only to be disconnected when a new bag is to be fitted fortnightly.
- Empty the bag using the drainage tap at the bottom of the bag.
- The bag should be emptied every three to four hours or before it becomes overfull (depending on how much you drink).

- Always keep the drainage bag lower than the bladder.
- The leg bag should be changed every two weeks.

Catheter valves

A catheter valve may be used instead of a leg bag – this is sometimes called a flip-flow valve. This valve needs to be opened three to four hourly or when your bladder feels full. The valve is changed every 7-14 days.

Do not use this valve unless your doctor has told you that it is safe – it is not suitable for all people.



Changing the leg bag

The leg bag should be changed every two weeks or if it is damaged. The catheter and leg bag connection should only be disconnected when you change your leg bag.

To change the leg bag

- Wash and dry your hands well
- Place a towel on your lap between you and your catheter with your replacement leg bag beside you
- Pinch off the catheter and withdraw the fluted end of the bag tubing from the catheter outlet
- Remove the protective cap from the new leg bag and firmly insert the fluted end into the catheter outlet
- Secure the new bag to your leg using the straps provided
- Empty the urine from the old leg bag into the toilet
- Dispose of the old leg bag in the rubbish
- Wash and dry your hands.

Night bag

At night, a larger bag is attached to the bottom outlet of the leg bag or valve. The night bag has a larger capacity and longer tubing, allowing greater movement when in bed.

The night bag is replaced weekly.

To fit the night bag

- Wash and dry your hands well
- Remove the coloured cap from the night bag tubing
- Connect the fluted tip of the night bag into the bottom outlet of the leg bag
- Open the outlet tap on the leg bag so the urine can run freely into the night bag
- Place the night bag in a container e.g. plastic container, to contain any possible leakage from the night bag
- The night bag must be lower than your leg bag to aid drainage.

To remove the night bag

- Close the leg bag bottom outlet and detach the night bag
- Empty the night bag contents into the toilet or suitable container
- Wash out the night bag with warm soapy water and hang up to dry
- When dry, store in a clean sealed plastic bag.

Keeping your catheter working

To keep your catheter working properly:

- Always wash your hands before and after touching your catheter or drainage bags.
- Drink at least eight glasses of fluid in a 24-hour period (about a cup of fluid every hour while you are awake).
- Avoid constipation as this can affect catheter drainage. If constipation is a problem, ask your nurse for help or advice.
- When possible, take regular exercise.
- Avoid bending or kinking the catheter tubing.
- When using an electric blanket, place a draw sheet (or a plastic sheet with a fabric backing) between the electric blanket and the sheet as a preventative measure if leakage occurs.
- Ensure that you have a spare catheter and the related equipment at hand ready for the next change.

Personal hygiene

- Wash and dry your hands thoroughly before and after changing your catheter bags.
- Wash the area around your bladder outlet and catheter daily. Showering is preferable to bathing.
- Leave the leg bag in place while showering and towel it dry afterwards.
- Use unscented soap and warm water and rinse well to avoid irritation.
- Dry the area well, including the leg bag and straps.
- Avoid using talcum powder or any creams around this area, unless prescribed by your doctor.

Sexual intercourse

- Both partners should wash their genital area before and after intercourse.
- Women can tape the catheter out of the way, forward onto the abdomen.
- Men can fold the catheter tubing down over the erect penis, apply a condom and tape it in place.
- Use plenty of water-soluble lubricant, e.g. KY Jelly. Vaseline is not water-based and should not be used.
- Very rough intercourse should be avoided, and it may be necessary to find a new position that makes it comfortable for the partner with the catheter.
- If your catheter is causing you problems during sexual intercourse, do not hesitate to discuss this with your doctor.

Catheter problems

Urinary infection

Cause	Bacterial contamination
Signs	Smelly urine Abdominal pain Bleeding
Treatment	Increase fluid intake Try drinking a glass of cranberry juice per day as a preventative measure Contact your GP who may take a urine sample and prescribe a course of antibiotics.

Bladder spasm / leakage around your catheter

Cause	The bladder attempts to expel the catheter by creating pressure, forcing the urine out around the catheter, causing pain and leakage.
Signs	Lower abdominal pain Leakage of urine Decreased urine in the leg bag
Treatment	Take regular four-hourly paracetamol while pain is present Take regular solifenacin (anti-spasm) tablets to relax the bladder, as prescribed by your doctor If pain persists, contact your doctor or nurse.

No drainage in the bag for several hours

Cause	The tubing could be kinked or bent The bag is above bladder level You have not been drinking enough Constipation Catheter is blocked due to debris or blood clots
Signs	Very little or no urine passing into the leg bag
Treatment	Check the placement of your catheter tubing and drainage bag Try moving or walking around as this may dislodge a blockage Try squeezing the tubing of the leg bag to pump any blockage through If four hours or longer pass and there is no urine passing into the bag, then contact your doctor or nurse.

Bleeding

Cause	Irritation of the bladder or urethra by the catheter
Signs	Blood in the urine or around the catheter
Treatment	Increase your fluid intake If the bleeding persists or is still heavy after two days, contact your GP.

Please contact your GP immediately or visit the Emergency Department at your local hospital if you experience fever, loin pain, significant blood in your urine or an unexplained sudden onset of confusion.

On discharge from the hospital, the nurse will give you:

- A letter for your GP with details of your condition and follow-up care, including a date for the change or removal of your catheter, if required
- One leg bag and one night bag
- An appointment letter, if returning for catheter removal at the hospital.

Follow-up care

Your catheter may be removed by your GP in the community, or an assessment will be done by one of the Urology nurses or urologists to determine what should happen next. Some options include:

TURP

This is an operation on the prostate that will help improve your flow of urine.

You will be sent a letter to attend an appointment to discuss this and explain the surgery. You will also receive the date for your operation and a questionnaire to complete.

Trial of void (TOV)

If you are a Urology patient, the catheter will be removed in the TOV clinic, at the Christchurch Outpatients building (level 4). You will receive an appointment for this. You will need to stay for most of the day to see if you can pass urine. Be prepared to drink plenty of fluid throughout the day.

Permanent catheter

If your catheter is to remain permanently, it will need to be replaced periodically, as determined by medical or nursing advice. Your district nurse or GP will be responsible for changing your catheter.

Supplies

If you require a catheter long-term, your doctor or nurse will arrange your catheter requirements through the District Nursing Service. The District Nursing Service will contact you once they receive the referral.

If you are assessed by Nurse Maude as eligible to receive funding for your catheter supplies, you will be informed where you can collect your supplies from.

The supplies can be delivered to your home by courier for a fee. If you go on holiday, remember to inform Nurse Maude and arrange to take any supplies.

If you need additional supplies, they can be purchased from:

NURSE MAUDE HEALTH AND MOBILITY SHOP

87a Gasson Street	Monday – Friday
Sydenham	8.30 am – 4.30 pm
Christchurch 8023	Closed weekends and public holidays
(03) 375 4240	https://nursemaude.org.nz/health-and-mobility-shop/

Information for your District Nurse and GP

Date catheter inserted: ____ / ____ / ____

Type of catheter: Latex / Hydrogel / Silicone

Gauge of catheter: ____ French

Size of catheter: Female length / Male length

Volume in balloon: ____ mL

Date for trial removal / change of catheter: ____ / ____ / ____

Other information (relevant medications, etc):

Contact information

If you have any concerns or questions regarding your continence or catheter, please call one of our continence nurse specialists on (03) 364 0541 or (03) 364 1008.

For more information about:

- Hospital and specialist services, go to www.cdhb.health.nz
- Your health and medication, go to www.healthinfo.org.nz
- NZ Continence Association, go to www.continence.org.nz

For information on parking, how to get to the hospital, and visiting hours, please visit www.cdhb.health.nz