



# **A GUIDE TO MANAGING YOUR URINARY CATHETER AT HOME**

## **CLIENT INFORMATION**

## Introduction

Welcome to the Caremmunity booklet “A Guide to Managing Your Urinary Catheter at Home”.

At Caremmunity we are here to help you manage your urinary catheter and answer your questions. The nurse who comes to visit you to change the urinary catheter will talk with you about any of the problems or issues that may happen.

With the changes that a urinary catheter brings this booklet is intended to help you adjust in the days ahead. It can be difficult to manage at times however we are here to assist and are only a telephone call away on 8347-1343.

## What is a urinary catheter?

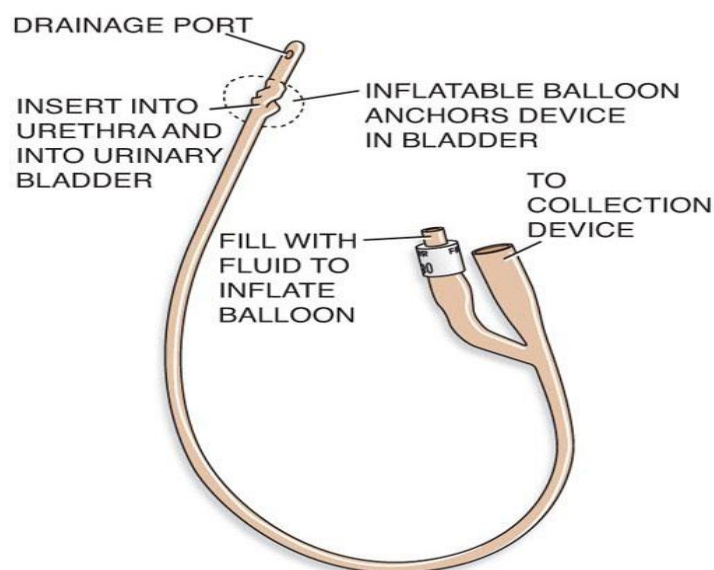
A urinary catheter is a narrow flexible tube inserted into the bladder to drain urine from the body. It is usually left in place with a drainage bag which is used to collect the urine.

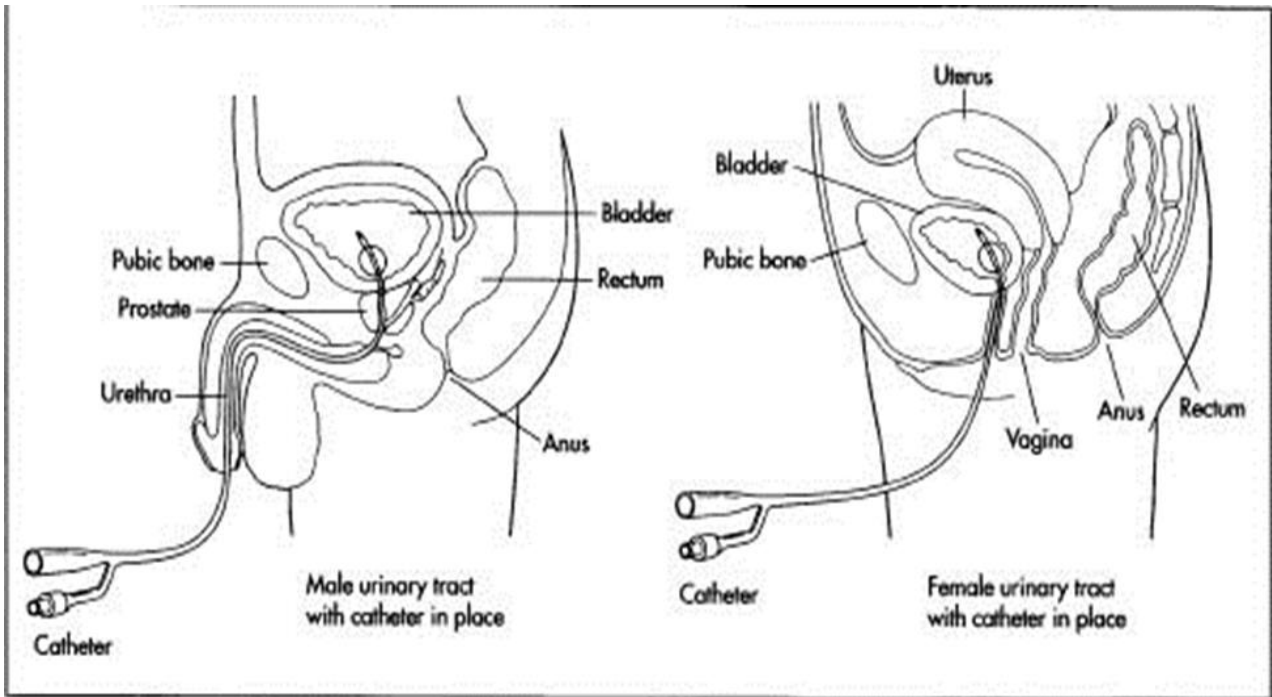
The length of time that the urinary catheter is left in place will be decided by your doctor. This may only be for a short time but will depend on the reason the urinary catheter was inserted.

Once the urinary catheter has been inserted into the bladder a small balloon is inflated on the end of it. This prevents the urinary catheter from sliding out of the body. When it is necessary to remove the urinary catheter, the balloon is deflated.

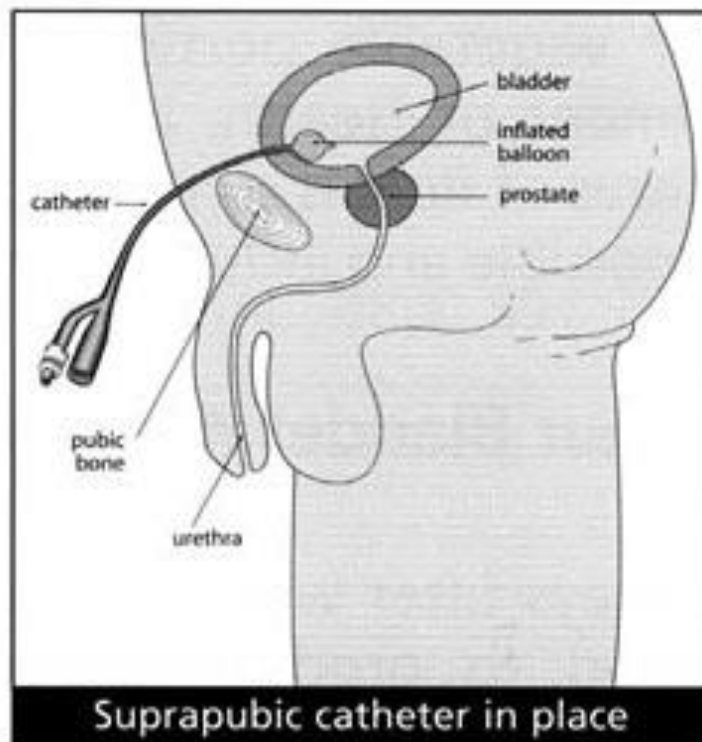
In the beginning the urinary catheter is inserted through the urethra (the tube from the bladder to the outside of your body).

Sometimes the doctor will decide that the urinary catheter needs to be inserted through a small hole above the pubic line - this is called a supra-pubic catheter. You can talk to your doctor to see if this is the best option for you.





Male and Female catheters in place



## Why do I have a urinary catheter?

The urinary catheter has been inserted into your bladder for one of a number of reasons including:

- To relieve an obstruction
- Because your bladder muscle has stopped working
- To empty the bladder prior to surgery
- To put medication into the bladder
- To irrigate the bladder
- Before doing an ultrasound
- To help a wound on your sacrum or between your legs to heal
- To collect a sterile specimen of urine
- To investigate a problem
- Following the birth of a baby
- Following surgery

It is important to discuss with your doctor why you have had the urinary catheter inserted and when it can be removed.

## What is the right kind of urinary catheter for me?

There are several different kinds of urinary catheter:

### Length:

- Female – this kind is shorter. Suited for either females or supra-pubic sites.
- Standard or Male – this kind is longer. Suited for males, females or supra-pubic sites.

### Material considered suitable for community use:

- Hydrogel bonded to Latex e.g. Bard Biocath
- 100% Silicone with integrated balloon e.g. Releen InLine
- Silastic e.g. Dover or Bard
- Supra-pubic catheter e.g. Supra-Cath

### Size:

Size is determined by several factors. A urinary catheter in the urethra should be the smallest possible to drain well. For females size 10-14 is best and for males 12-16 is best.

A urinary catheter in a supra-pubic site can be larger as the muscles of the abdomen are stronger. Often sizes 16-26 are used.

You can have a discussion with your nurse or doctor as to which is best for you.

## Caring for your urinary catheter

It is important to look after your urinary catheter.

- Always wash your hands before and after you need to touch your catheter.
- Use soap and water. Dry your hands with a clean towel.

- It is important to secure the urinary catheter to your thigh to prevent it tugging and pulling inside your bladder.
- For daily hygiene you can wash the urinary catheter in the shower. Remember not to disconnect the urinary catheter from the leg bag or valve. When you are showering remember to wash the genital area and urinary catheter thoroughly.
- When you have finished your shower you can change the leg bag straps for dry ones. Straps can be hung to dry on the washing line or inside where convenient.
- It is important to empty the leg bag every 2-3 hours or when it feels heavy on the leg. Do not let your leg bag become too full as this will cause tugging inside the bladder. If the leg bag becomes too full and the urinary catheter cannot empty into the bag this may cause infection, urinary backflow/leakage or pain.
- Make sure that your urinary catheter tubing is not bent or kinked as this will block the flow of urine from the bladder.
- Make sure that the urinary catheter and leg bag are lower than the bladder otherwise urine will not drain properly.



## Caring for your leg bag

Your leg bag is the device which collects the urine as it drains from your bladder.

It is important to secure your leg bag to your leg to ensure it does not pull and tug on the catheter in your bladder.

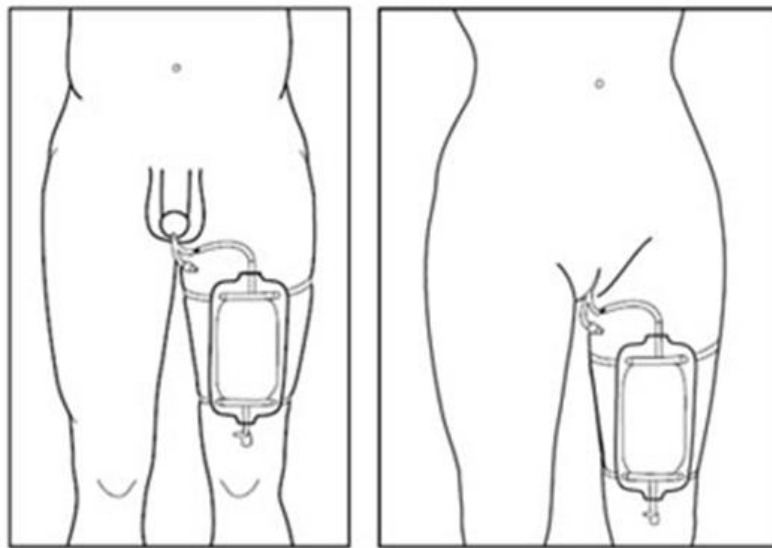
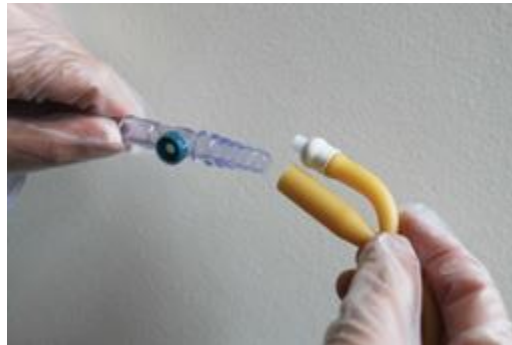
It is important to connect your leg bag correctly to the catheter to prevent infection, odour and leakage.

It is best to change your leg bag once a week or fortnight and replace it with a new sterile one.

To change the leg bag:

- Wash your hands
- Prepare the new leg bag by opening the wrapper on the new bag and removing the new bag
- If the drainage tube is too long you will need to shorten this by cutting the tube and inserting the provided new nozzle. You must wash and disinfect the scissors before cutting the tube.
- Once the tube is prepared and the new nozzle inserted: leave the bag to one side.
- Grasp the connection between the catheter and the old leg bag and ease apart.
- Remove the old leg bag and place into a garbage bag. Pick up the new bag; remove the covering cap (being careful not to touch the inside nozzle).

- Insert the nozzle of the new bag into the end of the catheter and push firmly together.
- Secure the leg bag to your thigh or lower leg.
- Dispose of all the garbage.
- Wash your hands



### Caring for your night bag

When you go to bed at night you may choose to use a night bag. Your night bag is the device that collects the urine overnight. It is bigger than the leg bag and can be washed and reused. The night bag can be changed up to four weekly when it is correctly cared for.

The night bag connects into the bottom of the leg bag when you go to bed and is disconnected in the morning.

At night it is important to:

- Wash your hands
- Empty the leg bag
- Grasp the end of night bag tube and firmly insert the nozzle of the tube into the bottom of the leg bag.
- Make sure the leg bag outlet tap is left open.

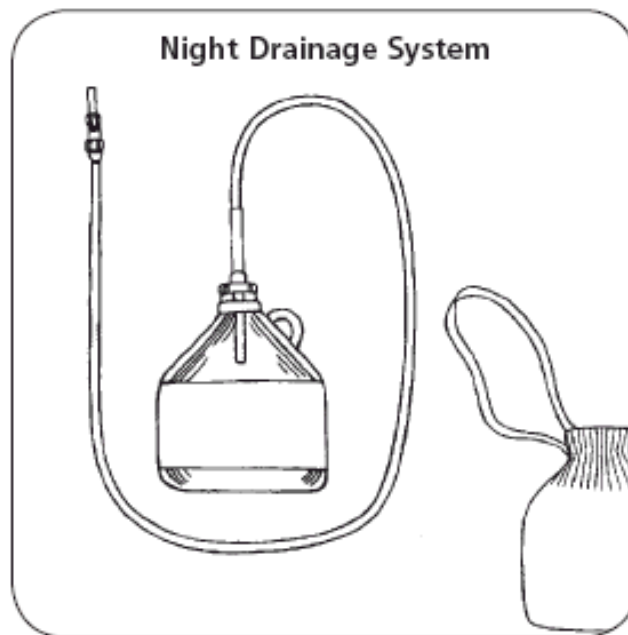
In the morning it is important to:

- Wash your hands
- Close the leg bag outlet tap

- Grasp the end of the night bag tube and disconnect the night bag tube from the leg bag outlet tap.
- Empty the night bag in the toilet
- Follow the instructions below to wash and care for the night bag.

To care for your night bag:

- Wash your hands
- Empty the night bag into the toilet
- Wash inside and out in warm soapy water
- Rinse in clean cold water
- Rinse again in a mixture of 1:4 vinegar
- Hang over the shower door to dry during the day



## Urinary Catheter Valves

Urinary catheter valves are another option to allow the urine to drain. A valve is inserted when your urinary catheter is put into the bladder and can be left until the next urinary catheter change. The person who changes your urinary catheter will put the valve in place.

The valve should be opened whenever you feel the need to empty your bladder. If you wake up at night and want to pass urine then you should go to the toilet and open the valve.

To empty your bladder using the valve:

- Wash your hands
- Open the tap on the valve and drain the urine into the toilet.
- Close the valve
- Wash your hands.

You can also use a night bag with the valve:

- Wash your hands
- Insert the nozzle of the night bag into the end of the tap.

- Open the tap
- Wash your hands
- In the morning follow the instructions above on how to clean the night bag

The valve can be kept clean by washing it in the shower every day. Do not remove it from the catheter. Once you have finished showering the valve and catheter can be dried with a clean towel.



## Good bowel health

When you have a urinary catheter in place it is important to make sure you do not become constipated. Some of the things that are important to remember to keep your bowel healthy are:

- Drink sufficient fluids throughout the day to meet your needs. See information below on how much is enough.
- Eat fruit and vegetables every day as recommended by the Heart Foundation (5 vegetables and 2 fruit).
- Eat whole grains to provide bulk and fibre.
- Adopt a good toileting posture to help with bowel evacuation.



Knees higher than hips  
 Lean forward and put elbows on knees  
 Bulge abdomen  
 Straighten spine



## Good bladder health: Your fluids

It is important to drink at least 1.5 litres per day however if you have a fluid restriction advised by your Doctor you must not have more than this amount. A mix of fluids with mostly water is healthy. You will find it easier to drink fluids across the day however you do not need more than one glass of fluids at night. The amount of fluids you drink will depend on:

- How active you are
- How hot the weather is
- Your age
- Your general state of health
- The colour of your urine

## Sexual Health, Body Image and Sense of Self

Everyone has a strong sense about their body image and how they present to other people. It is often important how others perceive us, how we look or feel and the difference this makes to how we are able to socialise.

When something changes about us our sense of body image changes and we may feel less confident about ourselves.

It is important to understand how to manage the catheter to ensure that it does not smell or leak causing embarrassment and discomfort. By following the tips and advice in this booklet you will be able to minimise any problems. This will help you feel more comfortable and confident about living with your with your catheter.

You may still be sexually active and want to continue this relationship. It is still possible to have sex with an indwelling urinary catheter. By following the following instructions you will remain safe and comfortable.

### For males:

- Prior to commencing sex empty the leg bag and remove the leg straps
- Once an erection has been achieved fold the catheter back along the shaft of the penis and apply a condom
- Once intercourse is completed, remove the condom and dispose of in the garbage
- Wash the catheter and genitals thoroughly. Dry with a clean towel
- Return the catheter and leg bag to their usual position

### For females:

- Prior to commencing sex empty the leg bag and remove the leg straps
- Strap the leg bag and catheter to the lower abdomen
- Once intercourse is completed wash the catheter and genitals thoroughly. Dry with a clean towel.
- Return the catheter and leg bag to their usual position

### For supra-pubic catheters:

- Prior to commencing sex empty the leg bag and remove the leg straps
- Strap the leg bag and catheter to the lower abdomen
- Once intercourse is completed wash the catheter and genitals thoroughly. Dry with a clean towel.
- Return the catheter and leg bag to their usual position.

## Troubleshooting

Trouble with your catheter? Try some of these tips below to sort the problem out. If these do not work contact your doctor or nurse for assistance. There are a number of things that can go wrong including:

Problem	Reasons	Answer
Urine is not draining	Is the catheter or leg bag tubing kinked or twisted.	Straighten the tubing
	Is the tubing or catheter blocked?	Milk the catheter to free any sediment
	Is the catheter strap incorrectly fitted and blocking the outlet of the catheter?	Reposition the strap.
	Is the catheter positioned correctly?	Reposition the catheter.
	Are you constipated?	Do you need to speak with you nurse or doctor about your bowels Do you need a suppository – speak with your doctor or nurse
	Are you drinking enough fluids?	Increase your fluids to a good amount as discussed in this booklet
	Is the bag blocked?	Try changing the leg bag.
Urine is thick, smelly, contains blood and you feel unwell.	Often this means a urinary infection.	Make an immediate appointment to see your doctor who will test your urine and prescribe antibiotics.
Catheter has fallen out	This may happen because: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Balloon has deflated</li> <li>• Pulled out accidentally</li> <li>• Bladder spasm</li> <li>• Infection</li> </ul>	Contact your nurse or doctor immediately to replace the catheter. Talk to your doctor or nurse about why this happened and what can be done to stop it happening again.
Urine keeps leaking around the catheter	This may happen because: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Catheter is too large/small</li> <li>• Infection</li> <li>• Bladder spasm</li> <li>• Catheter/leg bag not positioned correctly</li> <li>• Constipation</li> </ul>	Speak with your nurse or doctor about this problem. You can help by making sure the catheter/leg bag or positioned correctly, not tugging or pulling and that you watch for signs of infection. Make sure your bowels are not constipated by following the advice in this booklet.