



**A GUIDE TO MANAGING  
INTERMITTENT URINARY  
CATHETERISATION AT HOME**

**CLIENT INFORMATION**

## Introduction

Welcome to the Carecommunity client information handout "A Guide to Managing Intermittent Urinary Catheterisation at Home".

At Carecommunity we are here to help you manage your intermittent urinary catheter and answer your questions.

The nurse who comes to visit you will talk with you about any of the problems or issues that may happen. With the changes that an intermittent urinary catheter brings this handout 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 an intermittent urinary catheter?

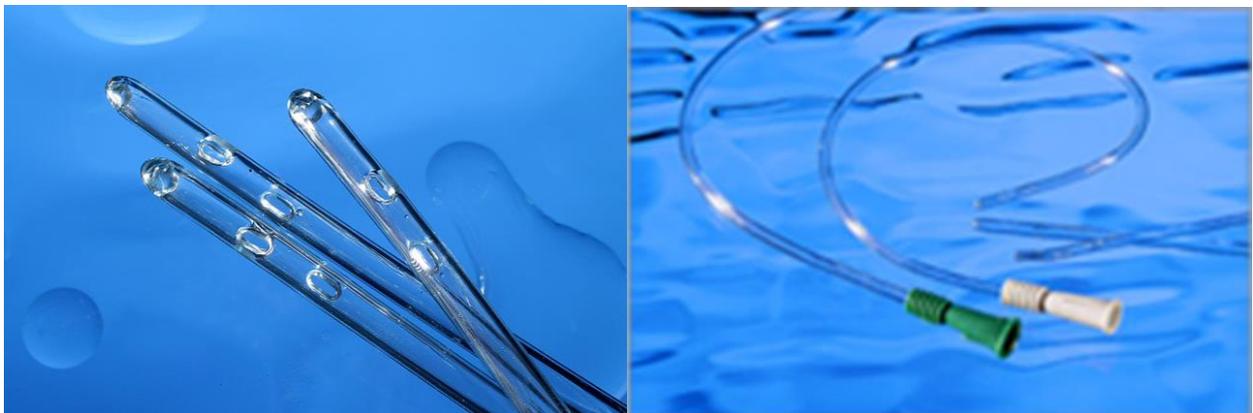
An intermittent urinary catheter is a narrow flexible tube inserted into the bladder to drain urine from the body.

There are several different types that you could use:

- Soft 100% silicone
- Rigid 100% silicone
- Short female length
- Long male/standard length
- Pre-lubricated
- Unlubricated

Intermittent urinary catheters:

- Are not retained in the body so do not have a retention balloon.
- Have two eyelets at the end to drain the urine.
- Are often more rigid than indwelling catheters as this helps with self-insertion.
- Have a funnel at one end to aid the flow of urine away from the body
- Are packaged singly
- Can be washed & reused (see instructions page 6)



## What is intermittent urinary catheterisation?

Intermittent catheterisation is the act of passing the narrow flexible tube into the bladder via the urethra or other continent urinary diversion.

The technique provides temporary relief and prevents the bladder from attaining urinary retention.

Clean self-intermittent catheterisation is the preferred option for bladder drainage as it prevents many of the problems normally seen with a permanent urinary catheter including:

- Infection
- Urethral erosion
- Catheter blockage
- Loss of independence

Clean self-intermittent catheterisation has many advantages including:

- Independence in care technique
- Reduced risk of infection
- Improved protection for the upper urinary system
- Reduced need for supplies & equipment
- Greater freedom to maintain sexual relationship
- Less negative impact on body image, sense of self & levels of social confidence
- Improved control of continence issues

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.

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

Clean self-intermittent catheterisation should follow a set routine to make sure that your bladder is correctly emptied.

In the beginning you may be asked to keep a bladder diary to work out how much urine your bladder holds, how often you pass urine & how much urine is left behind. Once this is understood you can work out with your doctor or nurse how many times a day you will need to pass the intermittent urinary catheter.

## Why do I need to do intermittent urinary catheterisation?

You have been asked to perform intermittent catheterisation for one of a number of reasons:

- To bypass an obstruction
- Because your bladder muscle has stopped working

- To empty the bladder prior to surgery
- To collect a sterile specimen of urine
- Following the birth of a baby
- Following surgery

It is important to discuss with your doctor why you have been asked to perform this procedure and how long it will continue.

## How do I do intermittent urinary catheterisation?

It is important to remember to follow a number of golden rules when performing this procedure. This will make sure that you reduce the chances of getting an infection or doing any damage.

### Equipment

- Intermittent catheter in the appropriate size
- Gel (unsterile)
- Wet wipes or warm wet face washer
- Container to catch urine if performed on the bed

### Process

- Wash your hands with soap & water
- Dry with a clean towel
- Open up the outer package of the catheter
- Coat the tip with gel. Leave catheter in the package & within easy reach
- Adopt the position that is comfortable & safe for you

#### For females:

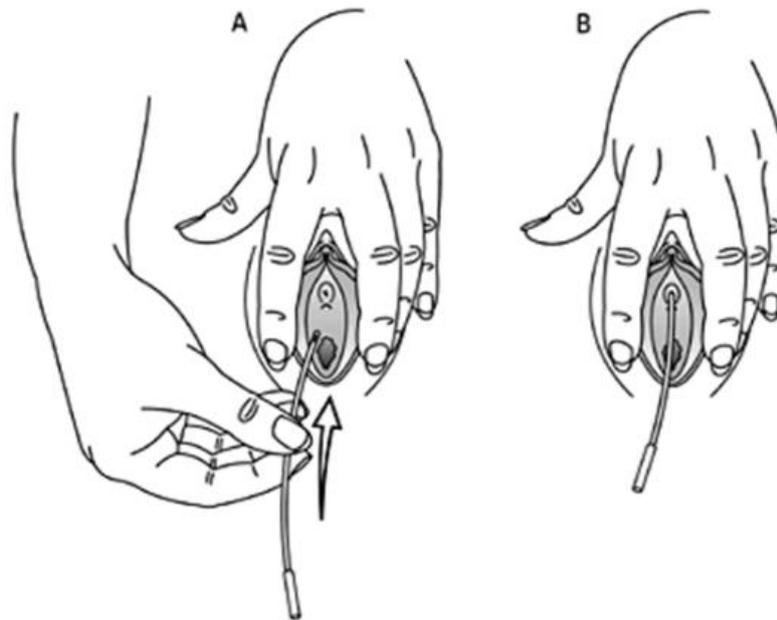
- Use the non-dominant hand to part the labia
- With the dominant hand clean the vulva from front to back with either a wet wipe or wet face washer
- Using the same dominant hand grasp the catheter & gently insert into the opening of the urethra
- Advance the catheter until urine flows
- Once the urine stops flowing withdraw the catheter slowly until the bladder is empty
- Remove the catheter
- You may either wash & reuse the catheter or dispose of it in the garbage

#### For males

- Use the non-dominant hand to pull back the foreskin
- With the dominant hand clean the head of the penis with either a wet wipe or wet face washer
- Using the same dominant hand hold the penis upright towards the umbilicus. Grasp the catheter & gently insert into the opening of the urethra

- Advance until slight resistance is felt then lower penis away from the umbilicus
- Advance the catheter until urine flows
- Once the urine stops flowing withdraw the catheter slowly until the bladder is empty
- Remove the catheter
- You may either wash & reuse the catheter or dispose of it in the garbage

#### Females



#### Males



### How to care for your intermittent urinary catheter

There are two ways in which you can care for your catheters:

- Wash and reuse: once used the catheter may be reused up 7 days. Wash the catheter in warm soapy water, rinse in clean cold water and air dry. The catheter may be stored in a hardwall container such as a toothbrush holder.
- Single use only: once used the catheter is disposed of in the garbage. A new sterile catheter is used on each occasion.



### Good bowel health

When you use an intermittent urinary catheter 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/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

It is important to drink at least 1.5 -2 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 fluid at night. The amount of fluid 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

It is not always easy to come to terms with doing this procedure.

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.

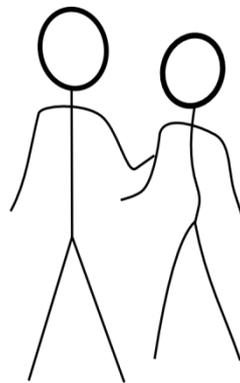
When something changes about us our sense of body image changes and we may feel less confident about ourselves.

It is important to understand how to manage this procedure to ensure that you do not become incontinent between each use of the catheter as this may cause 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.

You may still be sexually active and want to continue this relationship. For some couples the procedure can be incorporated into foreplay as it is important to empty the bladder before intercourse.

As your catheter is an intermittent one you do not need to take any special precautions during sex.

If you require any more information it is important to speak to your nurse or doctor.



## Troubleshooting

Got a problem? Try some of these tips below to sort the problem out. Contact your doctor or nurse for assistance if these are unsuccessful.

Problem	Reasons	Answer
Urine is not draining	Is the catheter inserted into the urethra far enough.	Gently insert the catheter further into the bladder until urine starts to flow. If pain or bleeding occurs STOP. Contact your doctor or nurse for advice immediately.
	Are you constipated?	Speak with you nurse or doctor about your bowels you may need a suppository.

	Are you drinking enough fluids?	Increase your fluids to a regular amount. See Fluid in this book.
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 does not want to go into the urethra	This may happen because of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anxiety</li> <li>• Constipation</li> <li>• Bladder spasm</li> <li>• Infection</li> <li>• Insufficient gel</li> </ul>	Being anxious in the early days is quite natural. Once you become more confident the anxiety settles. Follow the advice above if: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Constipated</li> <li>• You have bladder spasm</li> <li>• You develop an infection.</li> </ul> Try using plenty of gel to ensure the catheter is well lubricated.
Catheter does not want to come out of the urethra	This may happen due to a bladder spasm.	Leave the catheter in place for a few minutes. Cough & attempt withdrawal.
Bleeding	This may happen due to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technique</li> <li>• Infection</li> <li>• Constipation</li> <li>• Using old equipment</li> <li>• Over stretched bladder</li> </ul>	It is important to follow the advice given above about infection, technique & bowel health. Talk to the doctor or nurse about why you may have got an infection & how to stop this happening again. Change the catheter no less often than weekly. If the bladder is very large then it is important to drain it more regularly.