

Intermittent Clean Catheterization

Urologist: _____

Clinic phone: _____

Intermittent Clean Catheterization

What is intermittent clean catheterization?

- Intermittent clean catheterization is a way to drain urine (pee) from your bladder at different times. A catheter (thin tube) is passed through the urethra (tube that carries pee) into the bladder to drain pee.

Why do I need to use a catheter?

- Your bladder may not be fully empty, or it may not be able to hold all your pee. A catheter helps:
 - › Keep you dry
 - › Prevent infection
 - › Keep your bladder and kidneys healthy

How do I put the catheter in?

1. Before putting the catheter in, try to pee on your own, if you can.
2. Collect all your supplies:
 - ☐ Catheter type: _____
 - ☐ Catheter size: _____
 - ☐ Face cloth
 - ☐ Soap and water
 - ☐ Container to collect pee
 - ☐ **Water-based** lubricating jelly (lube), like Muko® or K-Y® Jelly
 - › **Do not** use petroleum jelly (Vaseline®) or mineral oil. These can raise your risk of getting a urinary tract infection (UTI).
 - ☐ Paper towel or a hand towel
 - ☐ Hand-held mirror (for people with internal genitals [vagina], a mirror can help you find your urethra)
3. Wash both hands with soap and water.
4. Keep the container close to your body and ready to collect pee.
5. Get into a comfortable position. If you can, sit on or stand by the toilet with 1 leg up on the toilet seat or on a ledge.
6. Squeeze a dab of lubricating jelly onto a paper towel or clean hand towel.

For people with internal genitals	For people with external genitals (penis)
<p>Note: Putting a tampon in your vagina may make it easier to put the catheter in.</p> <p>7. Roll the rounded end of the catheter in the lube, covering about 2 inches.</p>	<p>7. Roll the rounded end of the catheter in the lube, covering about 7 to 10 inches.</p>
<p>8. With 1 hand, separate your labia (folds of your skin that cover your urethra and vagina). Wash the area well with a soapy face cloth using downward strokes (from front to back).</p>	<p>8. Wash the end of your penis with warm water and soap. If you are not circumcised, pull back your foreskin before washing.</p>

For people with internal genitals	For people with external genitals (penis)
<p>9. Keeping your labia open with your thumb and middle (3rd) finger, use your index (2nd) finger to feel for the opening of your urethra. This is called the meatus. This is where pee comes out of your body.</p> <p>You will feel a hood or dimple covering the meatus. Keep your finger on that spot.</p>	<p>9. With 1 hand, hold your penis straight out.</p>

For people with internal genitals	For people with external genitals (penis)
10. Use your other hand to hold the catheter about 3 inches from the end. Touch the tip of the catheter to where your index finger is marking the spot. Gently push the catheter into the urinary opening. You may need to insert (put in) the catheter about 3 inches before pee starts to flow.	10. With the other hand, hold the catheter. Slowly insert the catheter into the opening of your urethra (where pee comes out of your body) until pee starts to flow. This may be 7 to 10 inches. Let your penis go back to its normal position.

The catheter may feel harder to push in **just before** it goes into your bladder. This is normal. It can be caused by a muscle spasm (cramp).

If the catheter is not going in easily, relax and breathe deeply. As you breathe in, keep pushing the catheter until it enters the bladder.

11. As pee starts to flow, move the end of the catheter towards the container or the toilet.
12. When the flow of pee stops, slowly take out the catheter. If pee starts to flow again, stop taking the catheter out until it stops. Pinch the catheter closed and take it out.
13. Write down the amount of pee in the container before you empty it. Keep track of these amounts for your next appointment with your primary health care provider (family doctor or nurse practitioner).

Washing your catheter

- Reusable catheters can be used for about 1 week (7 days). Try to have an extra catheter as a back-up.
- If you cannot wash the catheter right away, put it in a resealable plastic bag and clean it later.
- Catheters **do not** need to be boiled before each use. This is a clean procedure, but not sterile (germ-free).

To wash:

1. Wash the catheter with liquid dish soap and water or a mix of vinegar and water.
2. Rinse well inside and out and air dry.
3. Put the catheter into a clean container, like a toothbrush holder.

Remember

- Try to empty your bladder often. **Do not** wait to empty your bladder. Waiting too long can lead to:
 - › An infection
 - › A stretched bladder
 - › Leaks
- Bring your catheter supplies with you wherever you go.
- **It is important to wash your hands and genitals before emptying your bladder. If you cannot wash up right away, it is more important to empty your bladder instead.**
- Make sure the catheter does not touch any dirty areas before putting it inside your body (like a public washroom).

Call your primary health care provider if you:

- › Have a fever (temperature above 38 °C or 100.4 °F)
- › Notice a bad smell
- › Have cloudy pee
- › See a change in how much pee you are passing
- › Cannot pee
- › Have burning, discomfort, or pain along the urethra
- › Have problems inserting the catheter (like pain or bleeding)
- **If you cannot reach your primary health care provider, go to the nearest Emergency Department right away.**
- **If you have any of the symptoms listed above, throw away your catheter and use a new one.**

[illegible]

This pamphlet is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to replace the advice or professional judgment of a health care provider. The information may not apply to all situations. If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

Find all patient education resources here:
www.nshealth.ca/patient-education-resources

Connect with a registered nurse in Nova Scotia any time:
Call 811 or visit: <https://811.novascotia.ca>

Prepared by: Department of Urology, Central Zone
Designed and Managed by: Library Services

WJ85-2222 © November 2025 Nova Scotia Health Authority
To be reviewed November 2028 or sooner, if needed.
Learn more: <https://library.nshealth.ca/patient-education-resources>