



Patient & Family Guide  
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# Care of Your Urinary Catheter at Home



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# Care of Your Urinary Catheter at Home

## What is a urinary catheter?

You are going home with a urinary catheter (thin, hollow tube) in your bladder. The catheter drains urine (pee) from your bladder all of the time. You do not need to use the toilet, a bedpan, or a urinal.

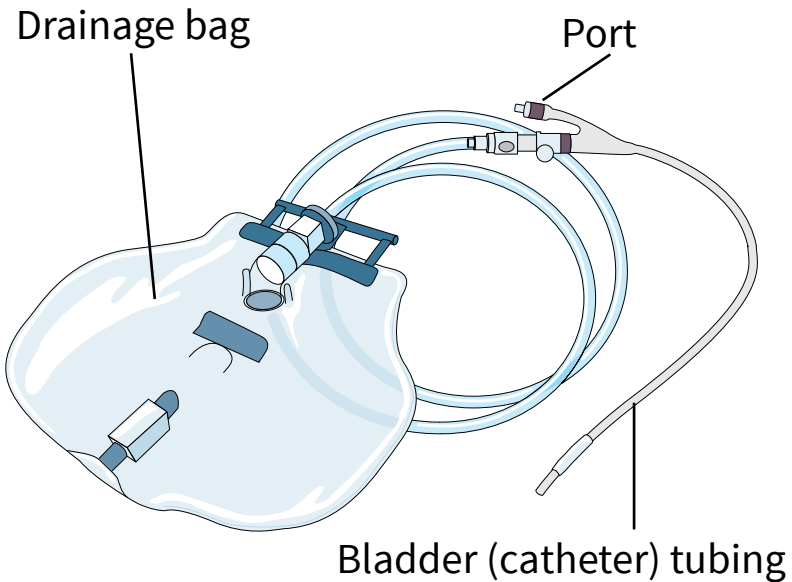
The catheter is held inside your bladder by a balloon filled with water. When you no longer need the catheter, a member of your health care team will let the water out of the balloon, so that the catheter can be taken out easily.

**What are your questions?**

**Please ask. We are here to help you.**

## If your surgeon has told you to remove the catheter at home:

- You will need to let the water out of the balloon, so that the catheter can be taken out easily.
- Have a towel ready, as some urine may leak from the catheter when it is removed.
- The port to let the water out of the balloon forms a “Y” shape from the bladder (catheter) tubing.



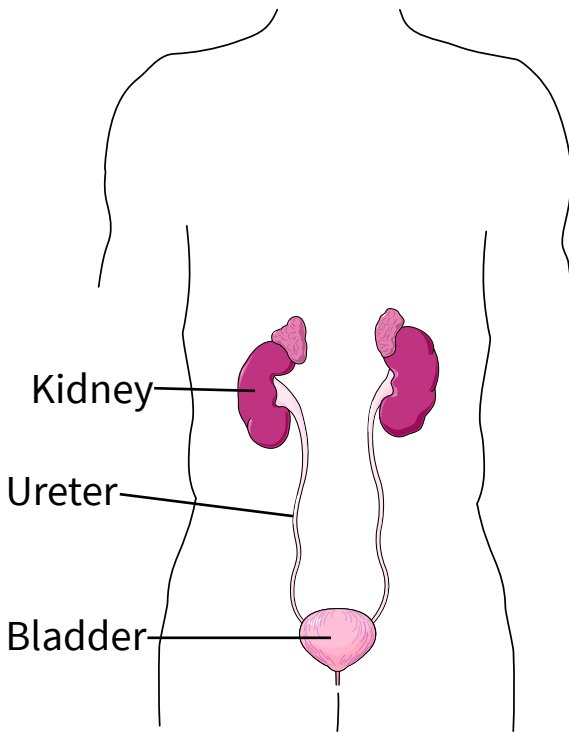
## To let the water out of the balloon:

1. **Wash your hands well with soap and water.** Make sure that the drainage bag has been emptied. This will lower the chance of spilling urine.
2. Place the syringe you were given by the health care team into the port, using a gentle, twisting motion.
3. Once the syringe is connected, gently pull the plunger back. You should not need to use a lot of pressure.
4. There should be fluid in the chamber. If the syringe fills up quickly, you may need to push the fluid out. Then repeat steps 1 and 2 until there is no fluid coming into the syringe.
5. Once there is no fluid coming into the syringe, you are ready to take out the catheter.
6. Gently pull the catheter out using a steady motion. You may feel some pressure, similar to when you need to urinate (pee). It should not hurt. **If you have pain, repeat steps 1 to 3.**

**If you still have pain after repeating these steps, call your urologist (specialist) or primary health care provider (family doctor or nurse practitioner). DO NOT keep trying to take out your catheter.**

- Once you have taken out your catheter, place it in the garbage with the drainage bag. **Then wash your hands well with soap and water.**
- After taking out the catheter, you may have a burning feeling when you urinate. This should go away within 48 hours (2 days). It may help to drink fluids as your body gets used to no longer having a catheter.
  - › If the feeling does not go away in 48 hours, or if it gets worse, contact your primary health care provider.
- Before you leave the hospital, your nurse will explain how to care for your catheter.

It is important to always wash your hands well with soap and water **before and after** you touch your catheter, tubing, or drainage bag.



## Keeping the area clean

Wash the area around the catheter (where the tube goes into your body) 2 times a day with soap and water, unless your health care provider gives you other instructions. Keeping the area clean helps to prevent infection.

**Remember**, before and after you touch your catheter, tubing, or drainage bag, always wash your hands well with soap and water.

## **What is a leg bag?**

A small plastic bag is attached to the catheter to hold your urine (pee). The bag is secured to your thigh and strapped to your upper calf (lower part of your leg). This makes it easier for you to move around without having to carry the leg bag.

**Note:** If you will be lying down for most of the day, ask a member of your health care team about using a large night drainage bag instead of a leg bag.

## **Care instructions:**

- **It is important to keep the connection between the catheter and the bag closed at all times unless you are changing the bag.**
- Be careful not to touch the surfaces of the cap directly.
- Empty the bag every 3 to 4 hours, or when it is 3/4 full.

## **To empty the bag**

1. **Wash your hands well with soap and water.**
2. Twist the blue drain cap (stopper) at the end of the bag to drain out all of the urine. **To lower the risk of infection, do not touch the tip of the drain.**
3. When the bag is empty, wipe the cap with an alcohol swab.
4. Twist the cap in the opposite direction to close it.
5. Wash your hands with soap and water.

## **Night drainage bag**

- This bag is bigger than a leg bag. You will be able to sleep through the night without having to empty it.
- Before you go to bed, change the leg bag to a night drainage bag.



## **To change from a leg bag to a night drainage bag**

- 1. Wash your hands well with soap and water.**
2. Empty the leg bag, following the steps on page 7.
3. When the bag is empty, wipe the cap with an alcohol swab.
4. Pinch off the soft, rubber catheter tube so that urine cannot leak out.
5. Disconnect the leg bag catheter with a twisting motion.
6. Take the cap off of the night drainage bag and clean the tubing tip with an alcohol swab. Insert (put in) the night bag tip in the catheter tubing.
7. Decide which side of the bed you want the bag on. Tape the drainage tubing to your thigh closest to that side. Remember to leave some extra length so the tubing does not pull when you move your leg while you are sleeping.
8. Wipe the leg bag with an alcohol swab and put the cap on the end of the tubing.
9. When you get into bed, move the drainage tubing so it does not kink (bend) or loop.

10. You can hang the drainage bag by its hook on the side of the bed or place it on a clean towel on the floor. **Do not let the bag touch the floor**, as this can cause an infection. **Keep your drainage bag lower than your bladder at all times. Do not put the bag on a bed or a chair**, as this can cause an infection. Always place the bag on something clean. If you choose to hang it on the bed — be careful not to pull out your catheter when getting up in the night.
11. Make sure the cap at the bottom of the night drainage bag is closed.

## **Nutrition and fluids**

- Drinking fluids helps to flush out your urinary tract (kidneys, ureters, bladder, and urethra). This helps to get rid of germs that cause infection.
- Drink 8 cups of fluid (like water, milk, juice, or decaffeinated tea or coffee) each day unless your primary health care provider gives you other instructions.
  - › People with certain medical conditions may not be able to drink a lot of fluids. Check with your health care provider.

- Avoid constipation (not being able to poop). Drinking fluids and slowly adding foods higher in fibre can help with this. High fibre foods include whole grain breads and cereals, vegetables, fresh fruit, dried peas, beans, lentils, nuts, and seeds. Ask your primary health care provider for more information.

## Important

- **Keep your drainage bag lower than your bladder at all times.**
- **Do not lie down with your leg bag on.** If you want to lie down during the day, change from a leg bag to a night drainage bag.
- Avoid kinks and loops in your drainage tubes. Keep the tubes straight.
- **Do not take a tub bath while you have a catheter,** as this may cause an infection. You may shower.
- **Do not have sex while you have a catheter.**
- It is normal to have a **small** amount of fluid leaking around your catheter sometimes, especially if you are straining (pushing hard) to poop.

**Contact your urologist or primary health care provider if:**

- The catheter falls out
- The catheter is not draining
- You have pain in any of the following areas:
  - › above your waist and to the side
  - › your back
  - › your lower abdomen (stomach area)
  - › your pelvis (bowl-shaped bones that connect the upper body to the legs) or hip
- You have a fever (temperature above 38° C/100.4° F)
- Your urine is cloudy or smells bad
- There is a lot of fluid leaking around your catheter or the fluid smells bad
- There are problems with the setup of your drainage system





### Looking for more health information?

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Contact your local public library for books, videos, magazines, and other resources.

For more information, go to <http://library.novascotia.ca>

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

Learn about other programs and services in your community: call 211 or visit <http://ns.211.ca>

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*Please do not use perfumed products. Thank you!*

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The information in this pamphlet is to be updated every 3 years or as needed.