

Urology – Acute Urinary Retention

Introduction

The Covid pandemic has had a significant impact on the NHS ability to provide routine elective services. We recognise that patients are waiting longer than we would all like and it is not always possible to identify when treatment will take place. This document provides you with information on how you can support yourself while waiting to attend the hospital.

What is a urinary catheter?

Urology covers the management of medical (i.e. non-surgical) problems, such as urinary tract infections and benign prostatic hyperplasia, as well as surgical problems, such as the surgical management of cancers, the correction of congenital abnormalities or correction of stress incontinence.

This guide relates to **acute urinary retention**, which happens when someone is unable to completely empty their bladder. Instead of all the urine being passed out through the urethra, some remains in the bladder. Urinary retention can be a short-term or long-term problem and can occur suddenly (acute) or get worse over time (chronic).

If urine stays in your bladder, it can lead to urinary incontinence (leaking urine between wees) and urinary tract infections. In severe cases, urine can start to ‘back up’ towards the kidneys, causing long-term damage.

A urinary catheter is a flexible tube used to empty the bladder when diagnosed with acute urinary retention. The tube can either be inserted through the tube that carries urine out of the bladder (urethral catheter) or through a small opening made in your lower stomach (suprapubic catheter).

Issue	Possible cause	Suggested action
<p>I think I may have an infection.</p> <p>Contact your health care professional if you have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fevers/chills • Nausea/ feeling sick • New pain or tenderness in your side (upper abdomen, back or side) or lower abdomen • Change in the look or smell of urine • Worsening mental status • Feeling unwell 	Dehydration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drink more, unless drinking is restricted due to medical reasons. • The recommendation, if you are not restricted, is 3 litres over 24 hours for 7 days
	Bladder stones	If persistent infections occur, your health care professional may consider referral to the Urology department for investigation and treatment.
	Personal hygiene	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adherence to strict hand washing • Cleanse around the catheter daily with mild soap and water and for men wash under the foreskin • Don't use oil based creams or talcum powder around the catheter area

If you do not have any of these symptoms it is unlikely that you will be prescribed antibiotics for an infection. This is because they are unlikely to be needed and may lead to antibiotic resistance.

Diagram to show the position of a urinary catheter in a male & female

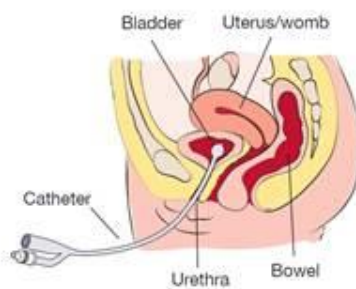


Figure 1 – Female catheter

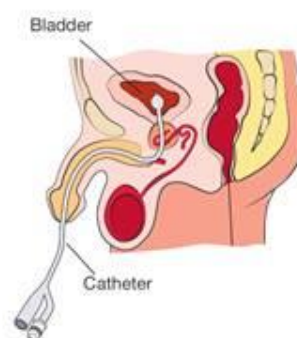
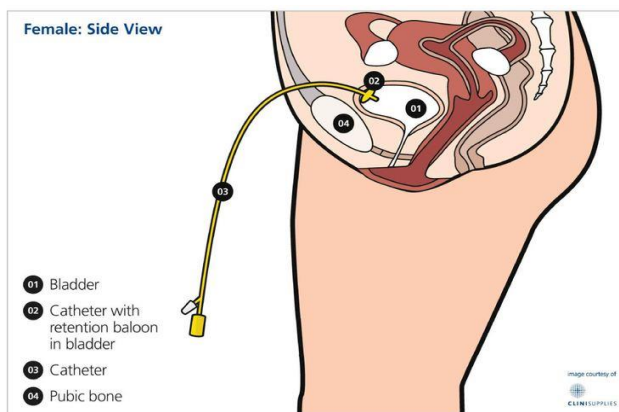
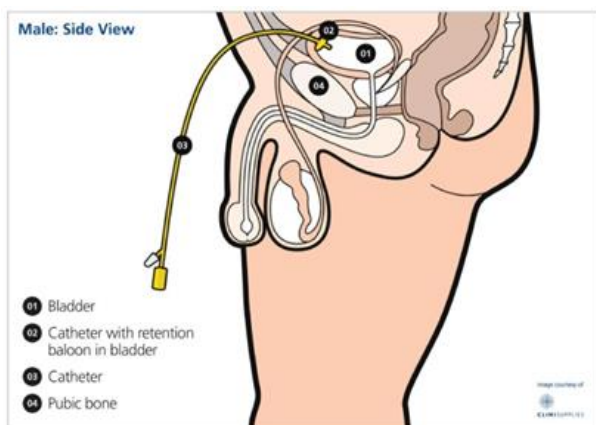


Figure 2 – Male catheter

Diagram to show the placement of a suprapubic catheter



Issue	Possible cause	Suggested action
I have blood in my urine (haematuria)	Underlying condition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contact your healthcare professional because: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You may be referred to the urology department, if clinically indicated They may flush your catheter if blockage occurs
	Infection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contact your healthcare professional: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> They may take a urine sample for further assessment Drink more, unless drinking is restricted due to medical reasons. The recommendation, if you are not restricted, is 3 litres over 24 hours for 7 days
	Injury (trauma)	Avoid allowing your catheter to pull by using a catheter retaining strap

General Daily Advice

- You need to drink at least two litres of fluids per day (unless medically advised otherwise) and ensure that your urine stays pale and isn't too concentrated. Diluted fruit juice (avoid citrus), water and decaffeinated drinks are recommended.
- Avoid constipation as this can affect how well the catheter drains. Staying hydrated can help this, as can eating high fibre foods such as fruit, vegetables and wholegrain foods.

Examples of indwelling urinary catheters



Issue	Possible cause	Suggested action
My catheter is not draining well	Constipation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain a healthy balanced diet Treat constipation- discuss suitable medications with your chemist or health care professional
	The catheter eyelet can get sucked into the bladder lining and block the catheter	Leave 5-10 mls (about a tablespoon) of urine in your bag when emptying it to prevent this vacuum effect
There is debris in my catheter bag/urine	Low fluid intake	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aim for fluid intake of 2 litres over 24 hour period (unless medically advised otherwise) Urine should be 'pale straw' colour A little exercise can help get rid of debris such as old cells

Trouble Shooting

Issue	Possible cause	Suggested action
My catheter is leaking	Kinks in tubing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Check catheter and bags are secure and freely draining Straighten any tubing The leg bag tubing may be too long or too short for your height – try a different length tubing Ensure the bag is below the level of your bladder – it works on gravity
	Bladder spasm	Discuss this with your health professional: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using narrower catheter size Check for constipation
	Catheter tends to block	Discuss with your health professional: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek medical advice

a. Emptying my Catheter Valve/ Leg Bag & Night Bay

You should open your catheter valve whenever you feel the need to pass urine; before bed, first thing in the morning and at least every four hours during the day. Before touching your catheter valve, wash and dry your hands thoroughly. Some bags and valves will have a push down tap, others may have a sliding valve. Push the tap down or slide the valve across to empty your urine. Once empty, close the tap or valve. Have a piece of tissue ready to wipe any excess urine in the tubing. Wash and dry your hands after emptying.



b. Changing my catheter valve or Catheter leg Bags

Your catheter valve and or bags should be changed every 7 days or earlier if soiled or damaged. Always wash your hands prior to handling your catheter.

c. Disposal

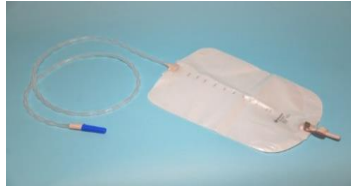
All your catheter supplies can be placed in your normal household waste. It's best to place your supplies in an old carrier bag or wrap in newspaper before placing

How can I reduce my risk of infection?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Before and after touching your catheter, draining your catheter or changing a bag or valve, you must always wash your hands thoroughly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your catheter should at no time touch the floor
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not kink or clamp the catheter tubing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not allow the drainage bag to fill beyond three-quarters full
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure your catheter drainage bag is below the level of your bladder (this will avoid back flow of urine) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Men should carefully wash under their foreskin at least once a day with mild soap and water. Dry the area thoroughly and make sure the foreskin is replaced over the end of the penis
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women should always wash the genital area from front to back passage and dry thoroughly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To avoid irritation, avoid using bubble bath, bath salts & creams
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not remove your leg bag when you have a bath or a shower 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not let the drain tube touch the container the urine is draining into, when emptying the bag or bladder.

a. Drainable night bag

During the day, once emptied, the night bag can be washed through with tap water, cap replaced on the top of the night bag tubing until ready to be attached again the following night. Night bags should be replaced every 7 days.



b. Single use night bags

Some patients may be issued with night bags that are used for one night only and are disposed of in the morning.



c. Night Bags

Overnight drainage bags are larger than leg bags to ensure you don't have to get up in the night to empty your bag. They attach to your catheter valve or leg bag and not directly to your catheter, there is no need to remove your valve or leg bag. Always wash your hands before attaching your night bag. It is best to remove or loosen the straps from your leg bag for overnight comfort.

Connect the end of your night bag to your valve or leg bag. Once connected, open the leg bag tap or valve and leave open whilst the night bag is attached. Your night bag should not be placed on the floor, but should be supported on a catheter drainage stand or holder on the side of your bed. Your catheter bag should be kept below the level of your bladder



d. Securing Your Catheter

Catheters and tubing should be well supported to reduce the risk of pulling and friction. A retaining strap / fixation device can secure your catheter firmly and comfortably against your leg.

The strap will prevent any sudden movement and will reduce the risk of pain or discomfort, trauma and leaking as it prevents the catheter from being accidentally pulled.



e. Drainage Options

Catheter Valve

Urinary catheter valves are like having a tap fitted to your catheter instead of a drainage bag. Catheter valves can be used on urethral or supra pubic catheters. Your bladder will be used to store urine which is then drained via the catheter. It is very important that you open the valve and empty your bladder when you feel the need to pass urine or at least four hourly.

Do not leave your bladder overfull. A catheter valve is inserted into the catheter and operated either by an up or down lever or a sliding tap to open and close it. The catheter and valve will usually lie across the base of your tummy, held in place by your underwear. If you wear loose fitting underwear then it is important the catheter is secured by a strap to the leg or securing device to minimise the risk of trauma to the urethra or supra pubic catheter site. Catheter valves should be change every 7 days.



Legs

Leg bags can be worn on your thigh or lower leg as shown in picture above. This is an example for both male and female patients. Your leg bag will be hidden under your clothing which will make you feel more comfortable about your catheter.

The leg bag can be attached to the leg using Velcro straps. It is important for your leg bag to be securely attached to your leg. Leg bags should be changed every 7 days. Leg bags have a tap at the bottom which allows the urine to be drained from the bag; this tap has a rubber extension on the end which allows your night bag to be attached securely.



Health and Wellbeing Guidance for Patients

Whilst you are waiting for any procedure, it is important to maintain a healthy lifestyle and be as medically fit as possible. If you have any long-standing conditions such as high blood pressure you should get this reviewed at your Doctor's surgery to make sure it remains well controlled. This will also help prevent any unnecessary delays when you come for your pre-operative assessment.

- Information on a range of **Rheumatology** conditions including Arthritis can be found on the following websites:
 - **Supporting Your Bladder & Bowel Health | Bladder & Bowel Community** (bladderandbowel.org) provides information and support on a range of Urology conditions.

General **health and wellbeing information** to support our local residents to stop smoking or with weight management **Healthy Surrey** has been commissioned to provide free stop smoking and weight management support our community.

- **National Stop Smoking and weight management support is also available via**
 - **Quit smoking - Better Health - NHS** (www.nhs.uk) The NHS stop smoking service provides a range of options to help you quit including support from an advisor, stop smoking medications, e-cigarettes and a digital offer for those who wish to quit by themselves. If you are not ready to quit smoking, but would like more information on how to protect your family, **Smoke free Homes**, advises on how to make your home and car smoke free.
 - **Live Well - NHS** (www.nhs.uk) are here to help you and offer different levels of support to maintain a healthy weight and to stop smoking, alcohol support and eating well etc.

- **Healthy eating and being active**

Information and advice on healthy eating and becoming more active is available from:

- **Eat well - NHS** (www.nhs.uk) (website) - includes easy to prepare meals for healthy meals and the **NHS Food Scanner app - Healthier Families - NHS** (www.nhs.uk) to help reduce levels of sugar in your diet.
- **Weight Management Service** The service supports adults aged 18 years or over who want to lose weight and have been identified as obese.
- **Lose weight - Better Health - NHS** (www.nhs.uk) (website) - includes tips on getting active for all, including the downloadable active apps, as well as tailored advice for those living with a long-term conditions.

- **Find out your BMI**

You can get help to lead a healthier lifestyle if you're an adult (18 years or over) living on the Isle of Wight and your body mass index (BMI) is above average. Use this tool to [BMI calculator](#) | [Check your BMI - NHS](#) | [Please fill in your details \(www.nhs.uk\)](#) if it's too high, sign up for a programme that will help you lose weight BMI of 30+

- **BMI of 28+**

You can get support from the 'Live Well' website, if your BMI is 28 or over if at least one of the following applies:

- you have Type 1 and 2 Diabetes or Metabolic Syndrome
- you have problems with your heart, circulation, hypertension or high blood pressure
- you have been diagnosed with anxiety/depression
- you need to lose weight before receiving another medical treatment or surgery
- you have a serious long-term health condition that is adversely affected by your weight such as muscular skeletal disorders (back pain, mobility issues) and asthma
- you're from a black or ethnic minority background.

- **BMI of 25+**

If you have a Body Mass Index of 25 or higher [Eat well - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#) provides online support to help you lose weight and includes access to the NHS 12-week weight loss plan.

The NHS 12-week fitness plan will support your weight loss plan as well as improve your health. This is aimed at beginners and will help get you into the habit of regular exercise over the course of the programme. It is structured but flexible enough to allow you to fit the exercise sessions around your other weekly commitments.

What tests will the GP do?

- If your General Practitioner (GP) suspects that you have a Urological condition they will refer you for some diagnostic tests prior to referring you to the specialist Urology service.
- It is important that your GP sends in ALL diagnostic test results that have been performed in primary care or other centres. This will ensure that your referral is managed appropriately and in a timely manner.

What should I do if my health is deteriorating?

If you are experiencing any worsening signs or symptoms of any Urological problems, you should first consult your GP. If you have an appointment with your GP surgery, Nurse or Hospital, **please remember to take your catheter passport with you.**

a. Urgent Health Advice

For urgent health advice about physical or mental health, when it's not an emergency, please call 111 from any landline or mobile phone. You can also visit www.nhs.uk. The NHS 111 service is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

b. Life Threatening Emergencies

For something life threatening – severe bleeding, breathing difficulties or chest pains – please dial 999.

Contact Us:

<p>Call: Surrey & Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust 01737 231958</p>	<p>Email: sash.pals@nhs.net For My Planned Care enquiries</p>	<p>Websites: Surreyandsussex.nhs.uk</p>
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This information in conjunction with your catheter passport will help you to understand how to look after your catheter and will keep you informed as to when your catheter can be removed or needs a change.