

Catheters

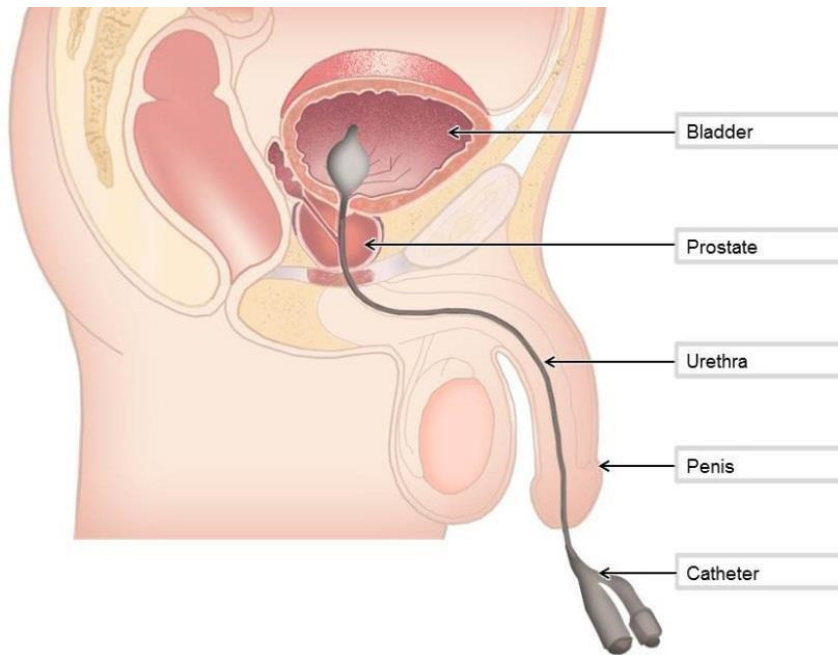
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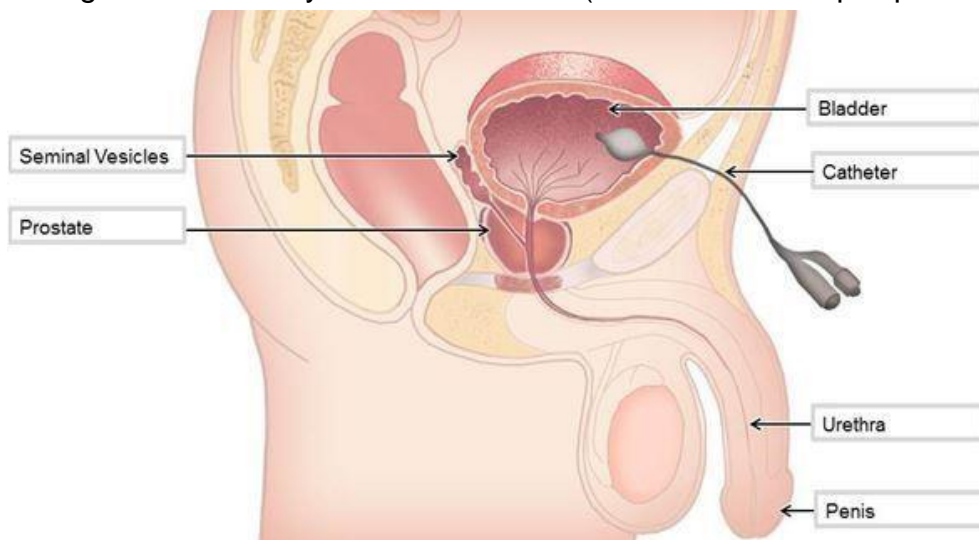
What is a catheter?

A catheter is a thin hollow flexible tube that is used to drain urine from your bladder. There are two ways to fit a catheter:

- Through your urethra, the tube through which urine passes.



- Through a channel in your abdomen wall (this is called a supra-pubic catheter).



Why do I need a catheter?

There are many reasons why people need a catheter. Your bladder may not contract properly to empty itself (retention) due to:

- 1) Enlarged prostate (men)
 - 2) Urethral stricture (scarring of the water pipe) 3)
- Other health related problems.

You may need a catheter for a long or short period of time. Your doctor / nurse should explain in detail why you need to have a catheter and how long you need it for.

Inserting a catheter

You will be asked to give your verbal consent (agreement) to have a catheter. Please feel free to ask any questions. You may be given antibiotics before or after the catheter is put in. Once the catheter is in place a balloon is inflated with water inside your bladder to prevent the catheter falling out. Your catheter will then be attached to a leg bag or a valve (flip flo valve). You will be given instructions explaining how to manage the equipment.

Leg Bag: a simple drainage bag that is strapped to your leg and collects urine. It needs emptying at regular intervals.

Catheter Valve: the urine collects in your bladder as normal; this is emptied at regular intervals via the valve.

Both the bag and the valve need changing every 5-7 days. It is important to change them to reduce the risk of infection.

At night the bag or valve should be attached to a larger bag (night bag). This bag holds more urine allowing the urine to drain freely overnight. The leg straps should be loosened so that they do not constrict the blood flow. The night bag should be discarded in the morning and can be disposed of with your regular rubbish.

A starter pack will be given to you by hospital staff. Future supplies will either be ordered by hospital staff direct to your home or arranged through your GP practice. Catheters and catheter equipment arranged through your GP may differ from the ones you have been sent home from the hospital with.

A catheter passport can be obtained from any ward in the hospital. This leaflet gives information and advice about managing your catheter at home.

Looking after your catheter

Hygiene: Always wash your hands before and after touching your catheter. If you can, bath or shower daily. Do not disconnect the leg bag or valve. Clean around the tube and remove dried secretions with soap and water. Avoid scented soap, talcum powder or cream as this can increase the infection risk. Men must ensure the foreskin is put back in place after cleaning the catheter.

Fluids and diet

It is important to drink plenty of fluids to keep the urine flowing. Try to drink 1.5 to 2 litres of fluid per day (six to eight large glasses of fluid). This will reduce the risks of blockages and infection. It is important to eat a balanced diet of fruit, vegetables and fibre to avoid constipation. If your bowel is full it can press on your bladder causing problems with drainage and may also cause leaking around the tube.

Frequently asked questions

Can I drink alcohol?

Drinking alcohol will not affect the catheter but if you are recovering from surgery or taking certain medication your doctor may advise against drinking alcohol, please ask your doctor / nurse.

Can I work and exercise as normal?

You can return to work, exercise or go on holiday as soon as you feel able to and your doctor has said you are fit enough to do so. Please be advised by your doctor.

Can I have sex?

If you were sexually active before having a catheter fitted, you should be able to have sex with one in place. A supra pubic catheter needs to be taped so that the tube is out of the way.

Men: With a urethral catheter you can leave the catheter in place but once you have an erection, you should fold the catheter under your penis and apply a condom over the penis and the catheter. You can use lubricating jelly if required as it will not damage the catheter. Always wash around the catheter after having sex.

Women: You can leave the catheter in place or pull it forward and tape it to your stomach. Lubricating jelly can be used. Always wash around your catheter after sexual intercourse.

Catheter problems

Some problems may occur when you have a catheter but your District Nurse, GP or Specialist Nurse can give you advice.

Bladder Spasms

These feel like abdominal cramps and are quite common when you have a catheter. The spasms are caused by the bladder trying to squeeze out the balloon. Medication can help with this and your GP can prescribe medication to stop this.

Blood in urine

When the catheter is first inserted or changed, your urine may be blood stained. If this continues after drinking extra fluids to flush the blood out, contact your GP or District Nurse. If the catheter is pulled it may cause bleeding. Make sure the catheter is secured properly. If you see large clots contact your GP / District Nurse as this may block the catheter.

Cloudy, smelly urine

Urine should be a light yellow colour (some medicine discolours urine). If your urine becomes cloudy, smelly or thick, check that you are drinking enough and increase your fluid intake. If you develop a high temperature, chills or sweats, contact your GP or Nurse as this may indicate a urine infection.

Leakage

This is called bypassing and is sometimes a result of bladder spasms or can occur when opening your bowels. It is important to check that urine is still draining from the catheter.

When to contact your GP immediately

- If your catheter falls out.
- If there is no drainage from the bladder for four hours or if you are experiencing pain and have been drinking fluids as normal.
- If you develop fever/sweats/chills or begin to feel unwell.
- If you see blood clots from the catheter.

Contact details at the Urology Department

If you have any concerns or need further advice please contact the urology department at the Royal United Hospital, Bath.

During office hours **Monday to Friday 9am-5pm:-**

If you have been in hospital within the last 2 weeks please ring **our main hospital switchboard on 01225 428331 and ask for the Urology Nurse Practitioner on bleep 7727 or 7641.**

Alternatively, please ring the urology nurses based in the out-patients department:-

- Via Urology Reception **01225 825990**
- Urology Nurse Specialists **01225 824034**

Please note the nurses' numbers have an answerphone as they may be in clinic but all answerphones are checked regularly and messages responded to.

During **out of office hours** please contact your GP Surgery for their twilight and out of hours service. Or call the RUH urgent surgical on call out-of-hours service on **07909 532251.**

The Sirona Care & Health Continence Promotion Unit is based at St Martin's Hospital and they can be contacted on 01225 831766.

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Please contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) if you require this leaflet in a different format, or would like to feedback your experience of the hospital. Email ruh-tr.PatientAdviceandLiaisonService@nhs.net or telephone 01225 825656.