

Urogynaecology department

Aftercare following insertion of suprapubic catheter

Information for patients, relatives and carers

Introduction

This leaflet aims to explain how to look after a suprapubic catheter. If you have any questions about the information in this leaflet, or anything else, please do not hesitate to ask your medical team.

What is a suprapubic catheter?

A suprapubic catheter is a hollow flexible tube (catheter) that is used to drain urine from the bladder. It is inserted into the bladder through a cut in your lower tummy, a few inches below the navel (tummy button). This is done under a local, spinal or a general anaesthetic.

The catheter is attached to a bag. There are two types of bags, one is a leg bag attached to the leg, the other is a night bag which can be attached to the side of the bed

Once you have had a suprapubic catheter fitted, we will contact the district nurses to let them know and will send your GP a copy of your discharge summary. You will be given a catheter passport which contains all the relevant information about your catheter and its care. Please read the information and always take it with you on your visit to the hospital, GP and the community nurse.

After the procedure

You will be given what is called a 'discharge summary' when you are ready to leave hospital. This contains important information about your admission and operation. If in the first few weeks after your discharge you need to call your GP or attend another hospital, please take the summary and this leaflet with you.

Aim to drink plenty of water (about 5 pints or 2.5ls every day, for the next two to three days) to flush the system through and minimise any bleeding.

You should visit A&E if:

- the bleeding continues for more than 72 hours (unless you are on blood-thinning drugs),
or
- if your pain becomes severe.

You should contact your GP if you experience a high temperature or the urine has a strong odour. It could be a urinary tract infection and you may need antibiotics.

A small dressing will be placed on the incision site. A district nurse should contact you a day or two after the procedure to ensure the wound is healing and that you are managing your catheter with no problems.

How to care for your suprapubic catheter

You should be able to lead a normal life as far as the catheter is concerned. However, personal hygiene is important to reduce the risk of infection.

- Wash your hands thoroughly after emptying or changing the leg bag.
- Try to shower every day using a clean cloth, unscented soap and warm water. Dry using a clean towel and pat the catheter dry.
- Clean around the catheter site with cooled boiled water or fresh wipes once or twice daily. If necessary, apply a clean dry dressing (only if there is a persistent discharge from the suprapubic site).
- Try to avoid constipation by drinking plenty of fluids including water (1.5 to 2 litres each day).

Types of drainage bag

There are two types of drainage bag:

- Leg bag (day bag)– this is worn under your normal clothes during the day and held in place by straps or a holster.
- Night bag – this is used while you're in bed. This is much larger and is attached to the day bag to hold all the urine that drains from the bladder overnight.

There are two types of night bags, drainable and non-drainable.

- Drainable night bags will need emptying after use and changing every 5 to 7 days, or earlier if it becomes damaged or visibly dirty.
- Non-drainable night bags are single use, so each bag can only be used once. Please follow the manufacturer's guidelines.

Changing the leg bag (day bag)

The leg bag will usually need emptying several times a day. It will need changing every 5 to 7 days, or earlier if it becomes damaged or visibly dirty.

The leg bag comes with the different length of tube:

- short tube – for use on the thigh
- long tube – for use on the lower leg.

Always ensure that each time you change or empty your leg bag, you wash your hands with warm soapy water and wipe them dry (before and after).

- Pinch off the catheter or sheath from the connector using the thumb and forefinger.
- Avoid touching the ends of any connecting tube.
- Remove the drainage bag tubing from the catheter, twisting the bag connector gently as you do this.
- Remove the protective cap from the new bag and immediately insert the drainage bag tube into the catheter.
- Replace the protective cap onto the old bag to avoid any spillage of urine from the full bag. Secure the new bag using the chosen method of support.
- Empty urine from the old drainage bag into the toilet or receptacle.

Attaching the night bag

Overnight, a 2-litre night bag should be connected to the tap of your leg bag as this avoids you having to get up to empty your leg bag during the night.

- Remove the protective cap from 2-litre bag.
- Attach the connector at the top of the night bag to the outlet tube of the leg bag and check the connection is secure.
- Open the tap on the leg bag to allow the urine to drain into the larger bag.
- Leave this open overnight to ensure free drainage.
- Attach the 2-litre bag to a suitable night bag stand.

It is important to keep the catheter bag below the level of your bladder, as gravity will help with drainage.

Removing the night bag

- Wash your hands before removing the night bag.
- Close the tap on your leg bag and secure it to your leg.
- Gently twist the night bag connector away from the leg bag and empty the urine into a toilet.
- If it's a single use night bag, ensure you dispose of it after emptying.
- If it's a 5 to 7 day drainable night bag, then you should put the protective cap back on the end and store ready for the next night.

Always keep a spare catheter with you.

Catheter change

Initially your catheter will need changing in 2 or 3 months. This will be done by the specialist nurses in the urology department. Subsequent changes can be done by the district nurse at 6 to 12 weekly intervals, depending on the type of catheter used and your own situation.

You or a family member may also be taught to change the catheter.

It is not unusual to see blood in the urine following a change of catheter.

You can get the supplies you need to use and look after your catheter on prescription from your GP. Your district nurse may be able to help with this.

Will I still be able to have sex?

Your sex life should not be affected as you can simply tape the catheter out of the way.

Can I go swimming?

You can swim, as long as the skin around the catheter has healed, is clean and dry and the swimming pool water is treated and clean. Afterwards, ensure your catheter site is clean and dried thoroughly.

If you choose to go swimming, there are smaller bags or catheter valves available that are more discrete.

Can I drive?

It is your responsibility to ensure you are fit to drive following surgery. You do not normally need to notify the DVLA unless you have a medical condition that will last longer than three months after your surgery and may affect your ability to drive.

You should, however, check with your insurance company before returning to driving.

Problems to look out for

We have used the traffic light system to show how urgently you should seek medical attention – green = can wait for few days; red = immediate.

Problem	What to do
Overgrowth of tissue surrounding the catheter site (over granulation)	Contact your district nurse or GP. They may be able to cauterise the overgrowth with silver nitrate.
Urine leaking around your catheter	Make sure the catheter is not full and is draining. Contact your GP or district nurse.
Urine leaking through the urethra (the duct which conveys urine out of the body)	Ensure the bag is draining. This can sometimes happen in small amounts even though the catheter is draining properly. Discuss it with your GP in the first instance. You may need to take some tablets.
Prolonged pain	Contact your GP or nurse
Blood in the urine	Drink plenty of fluids. Contact your GP or nurse.
Catheter has fallen out	It must be replaced as a matter of urgency (within an hour) or the track will close up and it will not be possible to reinsert the catheter. Contact your GP for immediate advice or come directly to A&E.
Urine not draining into the bag	Check there are no kinks in the tubing and the bag is below the level of the bladder. If the tubing and bag are in the correct positions and the catheter is still not draining, contact your GP or nurse or NHS 111.
Fever; redness or throbbing, or both, in the wound; any pus from the catheter	See your GP immediately/

Blocked catheter: when to seek support from your nurse or A&E

If the catheter is blocked within four weeks of insertion, it may not be possible to change it as the channel between the skin and the bladder will not have healed completely.

If blockage does occur within four weeks, it is important that the catheter is not taken out in an attempt to change it. It should be left in place and an additional catheter should be placed into the bladder through the urethra.

If your catheter becomes blocked, please inform your district nurse or attend A&E if out of hours
Weekends – please attend A&E.

Patient support group

The Bladder and Bowel Community is a support group for people who experience bladder and bowel problems. Visit www.bladderandbowel.org

How do I make a comment about my visit?

We aim to provide the best possible service and staff will be happy to answer any of the questions you may have. If you have any **suggestions** or **comments** about your visit, please either speak to a member of staff or contact the patient advice and liaison service (**PALS**) on **020 3312 7777** (10.00 – 16.00, Monday to Friday). You can also email PALS at imperial.pals@nhs.net The PALS team will listen to your concerns, suggestions or queries and is often able to help solve problems on your behalf.

Alternatively, you may wish to complain by contacting our complaints department:

Complaints department, fourth floor, Salton House, St Mary's Hospital, Praed Street
London W2 1NY

Email: ICHC-tr.Complaints@nhs.net

Telephone: **020 3312 1337 / 1349**

Alternative formats

This leaflet can be provided on request in large print or easy read, as a sound recording, in Braille or in alternative languages. Please email the communications team:
imperial.communications@nhs.net

Wi-fi

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