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Self catheterization - male

A urinary catheter tube drains urine from your bladder. You may need a catheter because you have urinary incontinence (leakage), urinary retention (not being able to urinate), prostate problems, or surgery that made it necessary.

Clean intermittent catheterization can be done using clean techniques.

What to Expect at Home

Urine will drain through your catheter into the toilet or a special container. Your doctor will show you how to use your catheter. After some practice, it will get easier.

Sometimes family members, a school nurse, or others may be able to help you use your catheter.

Catheters and other supplies can be bought at medical supply stores. Your doctor will give you a prescription for the right catheter for you. There are many different types and sizes. Other supplies may include towelettes and lubricant such as K-Y Jelly or Surgilube. Do not use Vaseline (petroleum jelly).

Ask your doctor how often you should empty your bladder with your catheter. Usually it's every 4 to 6 hours, or 4 to 6 times a day.

Always empty your bladder first thing in the morning and just before you go to bed at night. You may need to empty your bladder more frequently if you have had more fluids to drink.

Avoid letting your bladder get too full. This increases your risk of infection or other complications.

Using Your Catheter

Follow these steps to insert your catheter:

Wash your hands well with soap and water.

Collect your supplies, including your catheter (open and ready to be used), a towelette or other cleaning wipe, lubricant, and a container to collect the urine if you are not planning to sit on the toilet. You may use clean disposable gloves if you prefer not to use your bare hands. The gloves do not need to be sterile unless your doctor says so.

Move back the foreskin of your penis if you are uncircumcised.

Wash the tip of your penis with Betadine (an antiseptic cleaner), a towelette, soap and water, or baby wipes the way your doctor or nurse showed you.

Apply the K-Y Jelly or another gel to the tip and top 2 inches of the catheter. (Some catheters come with gel already on them.)

With one hand, hold your penis straight out.

With your other hand, insert the catheter using firm, gentle pressure. Do not force it. Start over if it is not going in well. Try to relax and breathe deeply.

Once the catheter is in, urine will start to flow.

After urine starts to flow, gently push in the catheter about 2 more inches, or to the "Y" connector. (Younger boys will push in the catheter only about 1 inch more at this point.)

Let the urine drain into the toilet or special container.

When urine stops, slowly remove the catheter. Pinch the end closed to avoid getting wet.

Wash the end of your penis with a clean cloth or baby wipe. Make sure the foreskin is back in place if you are uncircumcised.

If you are using a container to collect urine, empty it into the toilet. Always close the toilet lid before flushing to prevent germs from spreading.

Wash your hands with soap and water.

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Cleaning Your Catheter

Some catheters are meant to be used only once. Many others can be re-used if cleaned appropriately. Most insurance companies will pay for you to use a sterile catheter for each use.

If you are reusing your catheter, you must clean it every day. Always make sure you are in a clean bathroom. Do not let the catheter touch any of the bathroom surfaces; not the toilet, wall, or floor.

Follow these steps:

Wash your hands well.

Rinse out the catheter with a solution of 1 part white vinegar and 4 parts water. Or, you can soak it in hydrogen peroxide for 30 minutes. You can also use warm water with soap. The catheter does not have to be sterile, just clean.

Rinse it again with cold water.

Hang the catheter over a towel to dry.

When it is dry, store the catheter in a new plastic bag.

Throw away the catheter when it becomes dry and brittle.

When to Call the Doctor

Call your doctor or nurse if:

You are having trouble inserting or cleaning your catheter

You are leaking urine between catheterization

You have a skin rash or sores

You notice a smell

You have penis pain

You have signs of infection, such as a burning sensation when you urinate, a fever, or chills

Alternate Names

Clean intermittent catheterization - male; CIC - male

References

Cespedes RD, Gerbec JL. Other therapies for storage and emptying failure. In: Wein AJ, ed. *Campbell-Walsh Urology*. 10th ed. Philadelphia, PA: Saunders Elsevier; 2011:chap 75.

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