Care of your urinary catheter and drainage bag
Disclaimer

This is general information developed by The Ottawa Hospital. It is not intended to replace the advice of a qualified health-care provider. Please consult your own personal physician who will be able to determine if this information is appropriate for your specific situation.
You will be going home with a urinary catheter placed in your bladder and connected to a drainage bag. You will need to know how to care for this catheter and the drainage bag.

**Care of the catheter**

1. Proper cleaning of the urinary catheter will help prevent getting a urinary tract (bladder) infection and skin breakdown.

2. Wash your hands with soap and water.

3. Clean the area around the drainage tube twice a day, using soap and water. Dry with a clean towel afterward.

4. Unless you’ve been told otherwise, it’s okay to shower with your catheter and drainage bag in place.

5. Secure the catheter to your leg or lower abdomen using tape or a catheter strap.

6. Make sure the tube does not get twisted or kinked.

7. Keep the drainage bag below the level of the bladder.

8. Make sure that the drainage bag does not drag and pull on the catheter.

9. Do not tug or pull on the catheter.

10. Do not apply powder or lotion to the catheter insertion site.

11. Observe the urine for colour, amount, odour and sediment. Urine should be pale yellow to light amber colour. Urine does not have a strong odour. A small amount of sediment may or may not be present in the urine. If allowed, you should drink 1 to 2 liters of fluid daily—this will help keep your urine clear.
12. An indwelling catheter might lead to a urinary tract infection. If you suspect an infection in your bladder, contact your doctor immediately and increase fluid intake. If your doctor gives you a prescription for antibiotics, remember to take all your antibiotics as ordered and complete the prescription.

**Signs of urinary tract/bladder infection may include:**
- fever (temperature greater than 38.5°C)
- chills
- increase in mucous and/or sediment, cloudy urine
- dull pain over the kidney area, lower back pain

13. A catheter can sometimes get blocked. When this happens, urine will not be able to drain and the bladder will become over-full. If this should happen contact your doctor.

**Signs of an overfilled bladder may include:**
- full feeling in bladder
- no urinary drainage
- chill/perspiration
- leakage around the catheter, with little or no urine coming through the catheter tubing
Care of your drainage bags

You will be given two types of bags. One is a leg bag that will be used during the day. The other is a larger drainage bag that will be used at night.

**Draining the leg bag**

A leg bag is a urine collection bag that is strapped to your leg. It is smaller than the bag that you may use at night. This smaller bag allows you to move around more easily. However, you must empty the leg bag every 3 to 4 hours. To drain the bag, follow these steps:

1. Wash your hands with soap and water.
2. Unfasten the lower leg strap.
3. Depending on your style of leg bag either remove the cap and open the clamp or twist the valve open. Do not touch the drain port with your fingers or allow it to touch the toilet seat.
4. Drain the urine into the toilet.
5. After the urine has drained completely, wipe the drain port and the cap with a cotton ball or gauze soaked with rubbing alcohol.
6. Close the clamp and fasten the lower leg strap.
7. Wash your hands with soap and water.
**Draining the large collection bag**

1. Wash your hands with soap and water.
2. Push the white plastic lever to the **Open** position.
3. Empty the urine into the toilet.
4. After the urine has drained completely, push the white lever to the **Close** position. Make sure you hear it click shut.
5. Wash your hands with soap and water.

**Changing collection bags**

During the day, you may want to use a leg bag. At night, you can change it for a larger collection bag.

1. Wash your hands with soap and water.
2. Drain the leg bag.
3. Unfasten the leg straps.
4. Use an alcohol swab or cotton ball with alcohol to clean the junction between the catheter and the bag.
5. Disconnect the leg bag; cap the opening, set aside to clean as per instructions below.
6. Clean the connection tip of the clean bag using an alcohol swab or cotton ball with alcohol.
7. Attach the end of the new bag to your catheter.
8. If you are attaching the larger collection bag for overnight use, hang the bag lower than your body when you are in bed.
9. If you are attaching the leg bag, wrap the elastic bands around your leg and clip them in place. Always be sure there are no kinks in the catheter tubing.
10. Follow the directions under “How to care for your drainage bags.”
11. Wash your hands with soap and water when you are finished.

**How to care for your drainage bags**

**Cleaning the drainage bags**

Follow these directions to care for either your leg bag or your night drainage bag:

1. Drainage bags must be cleaned daily with either:
   a. A household bleach solution diluted in a 1:10 ratio (one part bleach to ten parts tap water). If you are using the bleach solution, wear protective gloves. Skin irritation can occur if bleach is allowed to come in contact with skin.
   b. A vinegar solution (one part vinegar to three parts tap water).
2. Wash your hands with soap and water.
3. Use an alcohol swab or cotton ball soaked with alcohol to clean the junction between the catheter and the bag.
4. Disconnect the used bag, cap the opening, and set aside.
5. Clean the connection tip of the clean bag using an alcohol swab or cotton ball soaked with alcohol.
6. Attach the end of the new bag to your catheter.
7. Rinse the used bag twice with water by agitating the water vigorously and let drain.
8. Fill the bag with the 150 mL of the prepared solution and agitate vigorously. Drain the bag and allow to air dry.
9. Wash your hands with soap and water.
Special note: You may use both types of drainage bags for up to one month. After one month, you will need new bags. You can buy new bags at most health-care supply stores.

Getting ready for bed

When your night drainage bag is connected and you are ready to go to bed, decide on which side of the bed you want the drainage bag to hang. Tape the drainage tubing to the thigh of the leg that will be next to the side of the bed where the bag will hang. Leave some slack in the line so you will not pull on the catheter when you move while sleeping.

When you get into bed, set up the drainage tubing so it does not kink or loop.

Then hang the drainage bag by its hook from the side of the bed frame. Be sure to keep the drainage bag below the level of the bladder at all times, whether you are lying, sitting, or standing. Do not hang the bag from the headboard or footboard of the bed, or from a chair beside the bed.