



## Bladder Catheter Care

*This information along with other educational material is available on our website at [www.WatsonClinic.com/GynOnc](http://www.WatsonClinic.com/GynOnc)*

### What is a bladder catheter?

A bladder catheter is a long hollow rubber or silicone tube that is inserted into your bladder (organ that holds urine). A small balloon is inflated at the tip once it has been inserted. This balloon keeps the catheter in place. The other end of the tube is connected to a drainage bag. The catheter is used to keep your bladder drained of urine. Your doctor will determine how long the catheter needs to remain in place.

### Why do I need a bladder catheter?

There are many reasons that you may require a catheter.

- ◆ A catheter may be placed during surgery and will need to stay in place until your bladder function returns to normal. This may be just overnight or may be several weeks depending on the nature of the procedure you underwent.
- ◆ A catheter may be required when it is important to know exactly how much urine your body is making in order to provide the best care for you.
- ◆ A catheter may be required if you are unable to empty your bladder or if you are simply unable to get to the bathroom to empty your bladder.
- ◆ A catheter may be required if you leak urine from your bladder uncontrollably.
- ◆ A catheter may be required to prevent frequent soiling of fresh surgical or open wounds on your genitals or buttocks.

### How do I take care of my bladder catheter?

In general, a bladder catheter should be looked upon as only a minor inconvenience. It does require some special attention however with regards to emptying the drainage bag. Home health nursing care can be arranged to assist you in caring for your catheter if you desire. Whether or not home health nurses are involved, you will want to be aware of the following things in order to care for your catheter and to minimize any discomfort associated with your catheter.

### General Guidelines

- ◆ Drink plenty of fluid to keep your urine flowing well (6-8 glasses per day).
- ◆ Do not attempt sexual intercourse.
- ◆ Avoid becoming constipated or straining with bowel movements. Additional literature on constipation is available in our office if you require or desire such.
- ◆ You may shower as usual with normal soap and water.
- ◆ You may wrap some gauze around the catheter where it enters your body if there is some leakage. Change the gauze when it feels wet.
- ◆ Never pull on your catheter for any reason.
- ◆ You may find it most comfortable to keep the catheter secured to your leg so that it does not pull on your bladder and cause discomfort.
- ◆ Small amounts of blood or sediment are to be expected and do not warrant concern.
- ◆ Keeping your collection bag below the level of the bladder will optimize drainage.

## The Drainage Bag

There are two types of bags that can be attached to your catheter. The larger one has a longer tube and goes to a larger volume bag (top right photo). This is the preferred drainage bag to use except when leaving the house and going into public. Because of its size, it drains the bladder better and may prevent your bladder from getting over-full, which can delay the return of normal bladder function. The other bag has a shorter tube and a smaller collection bag and can be strapped to your leg (leg bag, middle right photo). This allows it to be kept out of sight under loose fitting pants or a long dress.

The larger bag must be used for overnight drainage since it holds more urine. Whenever the leg bag is used, it is necessary to pay close attention to its volume and not allow it to become over-full. If it gets too full, it will not drain the bladder well and urine will back up into the bladder delaying the return of normal bladder function. Poor bladder drainage also increases your risk of bladder infection.

Collection bags should be washed with soap and water when they are exchanged. You may disinfect the bag and remove the urine smell by rinsing the bag with a distilled vinegar solution (1¼ cups white vinegar mixed with 2 quarts of water). Do not rinse the bag with water after using the vinegar solution.

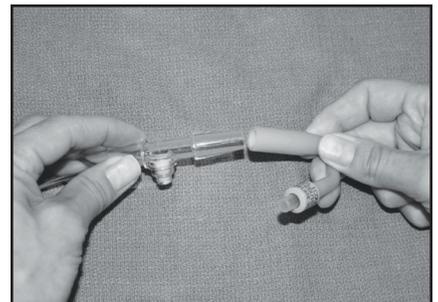
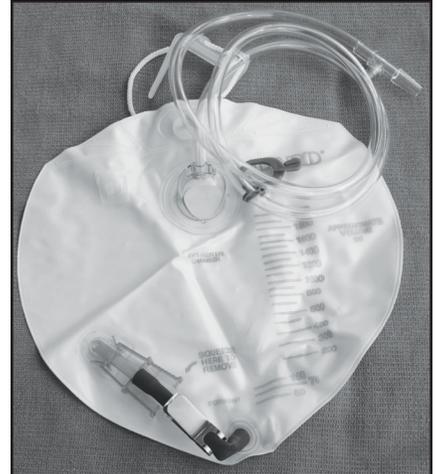
Your drainage bags should last 4-6 weeks under normal use with appropriate care. New bags can be purchased at medical supply stores.

### Changing the drainage bag

- ◆ Wash your hands with soap and water before and after handling the catheter or drainage bag.
- ◆ Empty the drainage bag as instructed below.
- ◆ Disconnect the drainage bag from the catheter and set aside for rinsing as described above.
- ◆ Clean the catheter and the connection tip of the new drainage bag with an alcohol soaked cotton ball, and then connect the new bag tubing to the catheter (bottom right photo).

### Emptying the drainage bag

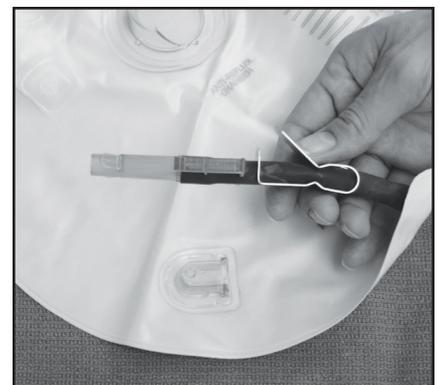
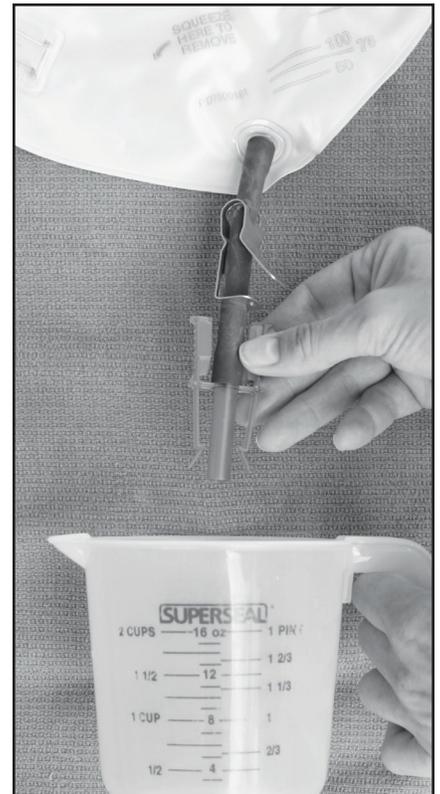
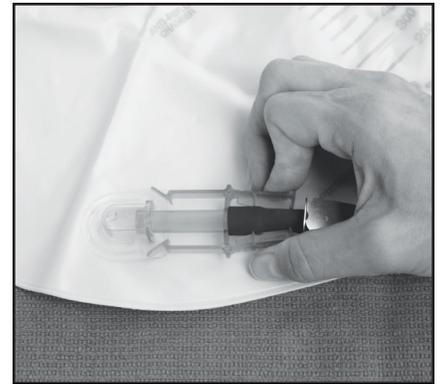
- ◆ Wash your hands with soap and water before and after handling the catheter or drainage bag.
- ◆ If using the leg bag, you may find it easier to empty if you release it from your leg prior to emptying the bag.
- ◆ *Leg collection bag*
  - After releasing the bag from your leg, remove the green cap on the bottom of the bag, and urine will begin to drain. (Some brands of leg bags also have a clamp that must be released or a valve that must be unscrewed in order to drain the urine after the cap is removed.)
  - Drain the urine into a container to measure the output. After documenting the volume, you may then pour the urine down the toilet. You may simply drain the bag into the toilet if output measurements are not required.
  - Wipe the drain port and cap with an alcohol soaked cotton ball and then put the cap back in place. (Before replacing the cap, remember to close the clamp or screw the valve closed if you have a leg bag with one of these mechanisms.)



- Reconnect the bag to your leg with the leg straps.

◆ **Larger collection bag**

- Release the green tubing from the plastic holder on the bag and open the clamp to drain the urine (top right photo).
- Drain the urine into a container to measure the output (middle right photo). After documenting the volume, you may then pour the urine down the toilet. You may simply drain the bag into the toilet if output measurements are not required.
- Close the clamp (bottom right photo).
- Wipe the green tubing with an alcohol soaked cotton ball and then put the green tubing back into the plastic holder.



**What else should I know about my catheter?**

- ◆ You may secure the drainage tubing to your thigh using medical tape (available at your local pharmacy or at a medical supply store). Leg straps specifically designed to hold your catheter in place against your leg are also available at medical supply stores. Leave some slack in the catheter so you don't risk pulling on the catheter while moving around, especially during sleep.
- ◆ When going to bed, secure the collection bag to the side of the bed below the level of your bladder. There may be a hook(s) on the bag that can be fastened to your bed frame. You may also use a safety pin placed around (not through) the tubing and hooked to the mattress cover.
- ◆ If your catheter is not draining:
  - Look for kinks or twists in the tubing.
  - Be sure you are not lying on the tubing.
  - Be sure the collection bag is below the level of your bladder.
  - Ask your home health nurse about catheter irrigation if none of the above seem to be the problem.
- ◆ If your catheter comes out, contact your home health nurse for reinsertion. If you cannot reach your home health nurse, we can replace your catheter in our office if during normal business hours. If after hours, you will need to go the emergency room or a nearby urgent care center for reinsertion (if your home health nurse is not available).
- ◆ Prophylactic antibiotics are not required when you have a bladder catheter in place. All women with prolonged catheter use will get some bacteria colonization in the bladder, but most do not develop an infection. Once your catheter is removed, we will likely give you a few days on antibiotics to help you clear these bacteria from your bladder.

**When should I call the office?**

- ◆ If your catheter is not draining or is leaking and your home health nurse is not available to assist you.
- ◆ If you see thick cloudy urine, mucous in the urine, or frank blood in the urine.
- ◆ If you experience a temperature of 100.5°F or higher.
- ◆ If you experience any new or unusual problem that you are concerned about.

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