

## Urinary Catheters and Urinary Tract Infections

A urinary catheter is a small tube placed in your bladder to drain urine. It is sometimes called a “Foley.” The tube connects to a bag that holds your urine. Catheters help if you have a hard time passing urine. Some people have one for a short time after surgery. The goal is to take this tube out as soon as you do not need it.

### When Not to Use a Catheter

Catheters should **not** be placed just because you cannot get out of bed. In some cases, a tube is placed just to drain the urine and then removed. Other options include:

- Condom catheter
- Urinals (female and male)
- Toileting schedule
- Bedpan/commode
- Incontinence pads

### Problems with Urinary Catheters

A catheter can make it hard to get out of bed and move around. Your health care team will work with you to make sure you can get up safely.

Catheters increase your risk of urinary tract infections (UTI). Germs grow on the tube and get into your bladder. This leads to infection in your bladder or kidneys. The longer you have a catheter, the more chance for infection. This is true even if the catheter is kept very clean.

### Symptoms of a UTI

Symptoms may include:

- Burning or pain when urinating
- Pain in the bladder area, lower back, or side of the body
- Sudden urge to urinate
- Passing small amounts of urine often
- Fever or chills

### Testing and Treatment

A sample of your urine is tested to see if you have a UTI. Treatment is based on your symptoms, test results, and medical history. Antibiotics are only used if an infection is confirmed.

### How to Prevent Infection

- Wash your hands. Do this before you touch the catheter or drainage bag.
- Make sure that the catheter is not kinked or bent. Attach it to one leg to prevent kinks.
- Always keep the catheter and drainage bag below the bladder and off the floor.
- Keep the catheter and drainage bag connected to keep out germs.
- Keep the catheter and the area around it clean.
- If using a catheter short-term reasons, **ask your health care team every day** if it can be removed.

The sooner the catheter comes out, the less chance you have of getting a UTI!

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Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright ©3/2018. University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#7355