

Suprapubic Catheter Home Care Instructions

You have a suprapubic (SP) catheter in place. During surgery, your surgeon created a small opening in your lower abdomen and placed the catheter into your bladder to drain urine. Read this handout to learn how to care for it at home.

Dressing Changes

Supplies

- 1 package of pre-split gauze
- Clear plastic tape (Transpore™)
- 1 package of cotton swabs (Q-tips®)
- Normal saline
- Sterile container
- Plastic bag

Directions

1. Wash your hands with soap and warm water. Dry with a clean towel.
2. Wash the work surface with soap and warm water then let the surface air-dry.
3. Gather all your supplies.
4. Pour normal saline into container.
5. Gently remove the old dressing. Put the old dressing into the plastic bag. **Avoid** touching any drainage and be careful not to pull the catheter.
6. Wash your hands again then clean the site with the saline solution using a cotton swab. Clean from the catheter site outward.
7. Grab a second cotton swab and repeat. **Do not** place a used swab back into the saline mixture.
8. Holding the gauze by the edges, place the **split gauze** around the SP catheter. Tape around the edges.
9. Put the used supplies in the plastic bag with the old dressing, seal the bag and put it in the garbage.

10. Wash your hands and the work surface with soap and warm water again.

If your doctor has told you to do so, you may wash the site with warm water and soap rather than saline.

Post-Void Residual (PVR) Checks

Your doctor wants you to check how well you empty your bladder at home by starting a Post-Void Residual (PVR) check. During a PVR check, you may be asked to stop the flow of urine by using a clamp on the SP tube. Once your bladder is full, urinate. You will then open the SP tube to let the rest of the urine drain from the bladder. You should begin this on: _____.

Directions:

1. Clamp the SP tube by turning the stopcock so that it forms a “T” with the tubing. If there is not a stopcock in-line, use a metal or plastic clamp.
2. Wait 4 hours after you clamp the tube then try to urinate. If you are unable to wait that long, you may urinate sooner. If you feel uncomfortable before the 4 hours is done, open the stopcock or clamp earlier. Write the amount of urine that was in your bladder down.
3. If you cannot urinate, open the clamp or stopcock and drain the urine and record the amount.
4. If you were able to urinate, measure the amount using the container you were given. Discard the urine into the toilet.
5. Open the stopcock or clamp. Urine will drain into the bag connected to the tube.
6. Leave the tube open for 5 minutes to

check that all the urine has been drained. After it's drained, close the stopcock or clamp.

7. Empty the urine from the bag into the container you urinated into.
8. Measure the amount of urine. This amount may be more or less than the amount you urinated. It is also possible that there will not be any urine left in your bladder after you void.
9. Write down how much you urinate and how much urine is left in your bladder. **Example:** Void 250 - PVR 75.
10. Bring what you wrote down when you come for your clinic visit.
11. If you are told to call your doctor with the results, call them on _____.

Unless you are told different, you may open the catheter at bedtime and leave it open for the night. Reclamp it and check your PVR in the morning.

Follow-up Visit

If the suprapubic (SP) tube was placed to help you heal after surgery, your doctor will tell you when to return to the clinic to remove the catheter.

If the SP tube was placed for long term bladder control, you will return to clinic in a month for the first SP tube change.

When to Call

Call your doctor or nurse if you notice:

- The catheter does not drain any urine.
- Bloody urine that does not clear after you rest for 30 minutes and drink four glasses of fluids. A small amount of bleeding is normal.
- The catheter falls out.
- Your temperature is higher than 100.5° F (orally) taken two times, 4 hours apart.
- Signs of infection such as:
 - Redness.
 - Swelling.
 - Warmth.
 - Drainage that is thick, discolored or has a foul odor.

Who to Call

If you have questions, please contact your provider through MyChart or call your provider listed in your After Visit Summary or After Hospital Care Plan. For a list of UW Health Clinics, please visit www.uwhealth.org/.

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 © 5/2026. University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#4593.