

Going Home with a Urinary (Bladder) Catheter

You will be going home with a urinary (bladder) catheter (Foley) in place. A nurse will talk with you about caring for the catheter before you go home. If you have any questions or problems after you go home, you should call your primary care provider.

A urinary catheter is a small tube placed in your bladder to drain urine. The tube connects to a bag that collects your urine.

Caring for Your Catheter

- Always wash your hands before and after touching the catheter and drainage bag.
- Wash the catheter from the insertion site out toward the drainage bag.
- Clean the urinary catheter with soap and water 2 times a day and after a bowel movement.
- Empty the drainage bag at least every 4-8 hours or if it is full.
- **Do not** touch the end of the drainage spout. If touched, the spout should be cleaned with an alcohol pad.
- If the drainage bag comes apart from the catheter, clean the ends of the tubing and catheter with an alcohol pad. Reconnect right away. Call your primary provider because the catheter may need to be changed.

Important Things to Know

Make sure that the catheter is attached/secured to your leg. This will prevent pulling on the catheter. Make sure the catheter tube is not pulled too tight. Keep catheter tubing in an "S" curve from insertion site to securing device. Wearing underwear can also help keep catheter tube secure. Make sure the tubing is not twisted or kinked.

Keep the catheter and drainage bag below the bladder and off the floor. Keep the catheter and drainage bag connected to keep out germs unless your provider allows you to use a leg bag during the day. **Do not** lie flat if you have a leg bag attached. This could cause urine backflow which could lead to an infection in your catheter.

Keep the catheter and the insertion site clean. Urine may sometimes leak around the catheter. There is no reason for alarm unless the catheter is always leaking or there is little or no urine going into the drainage bag.

Using Drainage Bags

The steps below will help you learn how to use the leg bag and nighttime drainage bags. Your nurse will go over these steps with you. Please ask questions. If you have any concerns after you go home, please call the phone numbers listed.

Steps to Empty a Leg Bag (Small)

1. Wash your hands with soap and water.
2. Dry with a clean towel.
3. Twist the cap at the bottom of the bag. It won't come off.
4. Drain the urine directly into the toilet, unless you have been told to measure it first.
5. After you have drained the urine, tighten the cap again.
6. Wash your hands.

Steps to Empty a Night Bag (Large)

1. Wash your hands with soap and water.
2. Dry with a clean towel.
3. To empty the bag, pull the tube downward from the plastic bracket.
4. Hold the tube over the toilet or the appropriate container if you need to measure the amount.
5. Open the metal or plastic clamp. Usually, you will be able to open it by pressing forward with your thumb.
6. Drain the urine into the toilet, unless you have been told to measure the amount.
7. Close the clamp tightly by pressing down and releasing. You will hear a “click” when the clamp is closed.
8. Place the tube back into the plastic bracket.
9. Wash your hands.

If you are asked to record the amount of urine, drain the urine into the container you were given for this purpose. Record the amount of urine and discard it into the toilet.

Attaching a Bag

Both leg and nighttime bags attach at the same point. The clear portion (tubing) can be removed. The rubber or silicone portion (catheter) should stay in your body. The bag drains by gravity.

Steps for Changing a Bag

You may need someone to help you with this at first.

1. Wash your hands with soap and water and dry well.
2. Your helper should also wash their hands with soap and water.
3. Close the clamps on the bottom of the bag you are removing and the one you are putting on to prevent urine from draining out.

4. Squeeze the rubber tubing to prevent urine from leaking.
5. Remove the current bag you are using at the point where the catheter meets the tubing.
6. Remove and save the cap that covers the tip of the new bag.
7. Wipe the ends of both tubes with an alcohol wipe.
8. Attach the new bag.
9. Cover the tip of the bag you removed with the cap from the new bag. You will need to wash this bag later.
10. Place the straps of the leg bag around your leg at a comfortable spot. The catheter should be high enough on the thigh to be in an “S” shape, not a straight line. **Do not** put the straps so tight that they leave a mark on your leg. You may have to readjust these once you stand.
11. The bag should be kept lower than your kidneys which are at the level of the bottom of your rib cage.
12. Rinse the bag that you just removed with a mixture of ½ cup white vinegar and ½ cup tap water using the syringe you were given. Drain. Rinse with clear water using the syringe. Allow the bag to air dry.

Helpful Hints

- You may switch from the night bag to the leg bag and vice-versa at a time that works well for you. Be sure to empty and clean the bags when not in use.
- The leg bag should not be worn at night because it can fill up quickly.

Catheter Problems

If the catheter is not draining into the bag or you have a lot of leakage around the catheter, try to:

- Change positions.
- Make sure that the bag is below the level of the bladder/pelvis.
- Make sure the tubing is not kinked, twisted, or bent in half.
- Make sure the leg strap or Statlock™ is not blocking drainage into the bag.

When to Call

- The catheter falls out.
- The catheter does not drain urine and you have tried one of the options above to fix it.
- Your urine becomes bloody.
- There is drainage around the catheter.
- Your temperature is greater than 100.5° F (by mouth) taken two times 4 hours apart.

Who to Call

If you have any problems or questions call:

UW Health Urology
608-263-4757

UW Health East Madison Hospital Urology
608-440-6464

UW Health One South Park Urology
608-287-2900

UW Health Advanced Pelvic Surgery Clinic
608-263-6240

American Family Children's Hospital
Pediatric Urology Clinic
608-263-6420

After hours, nights, weekends, and holidays, the clinic number is answered by the paging operator. Ask for the Urology doctor on call. Leave your name and phone number with the area code. The doctor will call you back.

Toll Free: 1-844-607-4800

If you are a patient receiving care at UnityPoint – Meriter, Swedish American or a health system outside of UW Health, please use the phone numbers provided in your discharge instructions for any questions or concerns.

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 © 5/2022. University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#4591