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Your Guide to Caring for Your Catheter

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Script-easy, 10 Commerce Way, Lancing, West Sussex, BN15 8TA
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Caring for Your Catheter

Your catheter has been inserted by a healthcare professional, to allow urine from your bladder to drain automatically. A small balloon, filled with water, enables the catheter to remain securely in place in your bladder. Your healthcare professional will advise you when your catheter needs to be changed, this will normally be at intervals of 6-12 weeks.

HOW TO LOOK AFTER YOUR CATHETER

- Always keep the area around the catheter as clean as possible using soap and water. This will minimise the risk of infection.
- Always wash your hands before and after you handle either the catheter or the drainage bag.
- You may bathe or shower as normal, ensuring that your bag remains connected.

FITTING LEG BAGS AND NIGHT DRAINAGE BAGS

- For your convenience a leg bag can be attached to your catheter during the day. The leg bag is straightforward to connect and your healthcare professional will take time to demonstrate this for you.
- For overnight drainage it is recommended that you attach the system to a larger overnight bag. Again this will be demonstrated to you by your healthcare professional.

To connect to an overnight drainage bag follow these simple instructions:

- Always leave the leg bag connected to the catheter (this will reduce the risk of infection.)
- Attach the connector of the overnight bag into the tube at the bottom of the leg bag drainage tap.
- Open the leg bag to allow urine to flow into the overnight bag.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- Do I need to drink more than usual?
You should drink at least 2-4 pints of a variety of fluids every day to allow your catheter to drain well. Water and fruit juices are particularly helpful.
- Do I need to have a special diet?
No. Continue to eat your normal diet but include high fibre to avoid constipation, as this can prevent your catheter from draining properly.
- Can I continue with normal daily activities?
Yes. Exercise will help the catheter drain, and the drainage bag can be adapted if you are particularly energetic. Sexual intercourse is still possible, discuss this with your healthcare professional for further advice.
- What if my catheter leaks/by passes?
Bypassing is often caused by a bladder spasm or a temporary blockage of the catheter. If this persists, inform your GP or healthcare professional.
- What do I do if there is a change in my urine?
If you notice that your urine is dark, concentrated or cloudy, increase your fluid intake. If symptoms persist contact your healthcare professional.
- What happens if my catheter stops draining?
Check that the tubing is not kinked and ensure that the drainage bag is not above the bladder as this can affect drainage. Remember to drink the advised amount of fluids each day. If the catheter does not start to drain or if you think you are constipated, contact your GP for advice.
- How often should I change my leg bag?
Usually 5-7 days is the recommended time between changes. Disconnect the leg bag only when it is time to change it.
- How do I dispose of used leg bags?
Always empty the bag, rinse it and place in a sealed plastic bag before putting it in the bin. Do not burn or incinerate the bag or flush it down the toilet.