

Caring for Your Urinary Catheter

Even though you probably won't have to wear a urinary catheter for very long, having the catheter takes a little getting used to.

Maybe you're wondering what to expect.

Sure, it might be a little awkward at first.

But knowing what to do will help.

So let's go over a few things, like what a catheter does; what you need to do to take care of it; and how to do your everyday activities while you have it.

A urinary catheter is a tube that lets urine flow from your bladder into a bag outside your body.

A small balloon is inflated at the tip of the tube to keep it from coming out.

Now, it's really important to keep your catheter clean to avoid infection.

Always wash your hands well before and after you touch the catheter and empty the urine bag.

Twice a day, use soap and water to wash the skin around where the catheter leaves your body.

And empty the bag every couple of hours, or whenever it's half full.

When you empty the bag, be careful that the bag's drain spout doesn't touch anything.

Call your doctor if your urine smells bad; if you see blood in your urine; or if very little urine or no urine is flowing into the bag for 4 or more hours.

And call if you have signs of an infection, like pain in your back or belly, or a fever or chills.

Make sure urine is flowing out of the catheter into the bag.

If it's not, check to see if the tubing is twisted or kinked.

Always keep the bag below your waist, and make sure it doesn't drag or pull on the catheter.

During the day, especially when you leave the house, you can strap the bag to your leg.

At bedtime, or anytime you'll be sitting or lying down for a long time, you can switch the leg bag with a larger bedside bag.

The larger bag has a hook so you can hang it on the side of your bed or on a chair.

Be sure the bag hangs low enough so the urine can drain into it.

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Now, when you have a catheter, there are some things you can't do, like taking a bath.

But there are lots of things you can still do, like taking a shower, shopping, and driving.

Just keep a few things in mind, and you'll be fine.

And sex may also be possible for you, so talk to your doctor about your options.

Wear loose-fitting clothing over the leg bag.

Be careful not to pull on the catheter when you're getting dressed.

Your doctor will let you know when it's time to have your catheter removed.

Having a catheter may be a challenge at first, but it helps when you know what to expect.

And if you have any concerns, you can always talk with your doctor.