Acknowledgements to Coloplast Ltd.

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**Introduction**

**The Urinary System**

Understanding how your body works will help make it clear as to exactly what you are doing with your catheter and where it is going.

Waste products are filtered from the blood in the kidneys to produce urine. This runs from the kidneys through the ureters into the bladder where it is stored. When there is approximately 400ml in the bladder, the urine must be emptied through the urethra to avoid discomfort and to drain the bladder.

In the **female urinary system** (shown facing page, top), the urethra is straight and about 3.5 cm in length. It runs from the bladder to a point between the vagina and the clitoris called the urethral orifice.

In the male urinary system (shown facing page, bottom) the urethra is about 15-20 cm in length and is shaped like an “S”. It runs from the bladder to the tip of the penis.
The Male Urinary System

- fallopian tube
- ovary
- sigmoid colon
- uterus
- fornix
- cervix
- rectum
- anus
- bladder
- pubic bone
- clitoris
- urethra
- vagina

Bladder
Seminal vesicle
Pubic symphysis
Bladder neck
Prostate
Urogenital diaphragm
Corpus cavernosum
Corpus spongiosum
Urethra
Ductus deferens
Shaft
Foreskin
Glands of penis
Navicular fossa
Urethral opening (Meatus)
Vas deferens
Epididymis
Scrotum
Testicle (testis)
Ejaculatory duct
Rectum
Anus
Tunica albuginea
Catheterisation – why is it necessary?

There are many reasons why some people cannot urinate voluntarily and require catheterisation, such as damage to the nerve supply to your bladder, back problems, an enlarged prostate, following an operation or a condition you were born with. Your condition may be temporary or it could be that you require long-term catheterisation.

Whatever the reason, urine must not be left in the bladder because if it remains there for too long, it can cause infection.

For people who cannot pass water themselves, a thin hollow tube known as a catheter has been designed to help empty your bladder artificially, easily and with the minimum of discomfort.

The most important advantage of catheterisation is the reduced risk of bladder infection and kidney damage which can be caused by an overfull bladder or by urine that stays in your bladder for too long.

Your healthcare professional will recommend the length of time that you should use a catheter. Whether it is short-term or long-term use, will depend upon the specific circumstances. Catheters are available in a wide variety of sizes, materials (Latex, Silicon or Teflon®) and different types. Your healthcare professional will help you choose the most suitable one for your needs.

A catheter that is left in place for a period of time is attached to a drainage bag to collect the urine and the drainage bag is then secured to the leg.

What is a Urinary Catheter?

A urinary catheter is a soft, hollow tube which houses two channels; one to allow urine to drain out and the other, a small channel, where sterile water is syringed in to inflate the balloon at the end of the catheter to hold it in place in the bladder.

The catheter is passed through the urethra into the bladder thus allowing the bladder to be emptied. Urine passes through the drainage eyes and down the catheter shaft.
Sometimes the catheter is passed through a small incision in the abdominal wall (supra-pubic catheterisation), but your healthcare professional will discuss the options available to you on an individual basis.

**Living with your Catheter**

Having a catheter should not limit your social and leisure activities or stop you from going away on holiday. In fact, some people find that it can be the start of a much improved quality of life.

There are many types of catheter available which can be left in place for up to three months, but this will be dependent on your personal circumstances. Your hospital healthcare professional/district nurse will advise you as to when it will need changing. When you have a catheter in place living in the community you should always be under the care of a local district nurse and know how to contact them. Your local district nurse team telephone number can be obtained from your GP (if you haven’t been issued with it already).

Sometimes a catheter may need to be changed more frequently if it becomes blocked and bladder maintenance solutions may be beneficial when this occurs. These would need to be prescribed by your district nurse healthcare professional. On occasions your catheter may leak (by pass) this can be due to bladder spasms and there are medications that can help to alleviate this problem. If this happens discuss it with your district nurse who can liaise with your GP.

For further advice, ask your District Nurse, Continence Adviser or Doctor.

**Hygiene**

The most important element of living with a catheter is hygiene. The most common problem when using a catheter is a urinary tract infection (UTI) due to bacteria entering the bladder from the catheter, or around it.
To minimise the risk of infection try to follow the guidelines below:

- You should always wash and dry your hands carefully with your soap and water before handling any part of your catheter or drainage system.
- If possible take a bath or shower every day, leaving your drainage system in place.
- Wash the catheter using downward strokes away from the body and then wash the area where the catheter enters the body with soap and water only. This should be done every day both morning and night and if possible after opening your bowels.
- If there is a discharge from where the catheter enters the body this area may be cleansed more frequently. If the discharge is discoloured or smells then you must contact your healthcare professional.
- Men should pay particular attention to washing under the foreskin if uncircumcised and should use a separate wash cloth for this part of your body. After washing place the foreskin back over the glands of the penis in its usual position.
- Women should always wash from front to back in order to prevent contamination from the area around the anus.

Your catheter should remain comfortable and pain-free. If you experience any discomfort, discharge or leakage, you should consult your healthcare professional.

On Holiday

There is a wide variety of urine bag styles and sizes available and it is possible to find one that can be worn with a skirt or shorts. If you plan to swim, a catheter valve which fits into the end of your catheter might be a suitable alternative to a leg bag. Your healthcare professional will be able to advise you further with this.
**Diet Tips**

Fluid intake is important for a healthy bladder. Make sure you drink the amount of daily fluid advised by your healthcare professional. Keep eating a well balanced diet. If you become constipated, it can put extra pressure on your bladder and urethra which could cause urine leakage.

If you require further dietary advice or experience any problems, contact your healthcare professional.

**Sexual Activity**

Having sex whilst wearing a catheter is possible, but it is very important to wash the area around the catheter before and after intercourse.

Before intercourse, a man with a urethral catheter can fold the catheter in along the side of his erect penis and hold it in place with a condom, while a woman can tape her catheter up onto her stomach with surgical tape.

Using lubricants like K-Y® Jelly, which you can buy at a chemist, will help you during lovemaking. You should not use Vaseline®, as this can damage the surface of the catheter.

A supra-pubic catheter, which has been inserted through the abdominal wall into the bladder, or a Nelaton catheter for intermittent self-catheterisation are possible alternatives to a permanent urethral catheter and offer greater sexual freedom.

If during intercourse there is any pain or discomfort you should talk to you healthcare professional. Do not feel embarrassed to ask them for further information as they are there to advise and help you.
Questions about catheterisation

Q: How would I know if my catheter was blocked?

If you notice that the urine bag is not filling as it normally would then you may have a kink in the catheter or leg bag tubing. Check to see where the tubing has kinked, and if so, you should straighten the tubing.

There are a variety of products available to help minimise the risk of any tubing kinking; such as catheter retaining straps and drainage bags with anti-kink tubing – ask advice from your district nurse / healthcare professional.

If the tubing is not the problem and you are experiencing lower abdominal or back pain, or have leakage of urine around the catheter, then this may be an indication that the catheter has developed a blockage.

In the first instance, you should remove your leg bag from your leg and elevate the urine bag for approximately 20 seconds above the level of your bladder.

This may help free any mucus form the bladder that may have entered the eyelets of the catheter. You will know if this has helped the situation, as when the bag is lowered, urine will begin to drain into the urine bag as normal.

If urine does not begin to flow freely into the bag then you should call your healthcare professional for further advice.

Q: How would I know if I have developed a urinary tract infection (UTI)?

You may experience one or more of the following symptoms: Lower abdominal pain/back pain, unpleasant smelling urine, discoloured urine/blood-stained urine, or fever type symptoms.
If you are experiencing any of these symptoms you should call your healthcare professional for further advice. During the assessment it is likely that they will take a sample of your urine for testing.

**Q: What do I do if my catheter falls out?**

You should call your District Nurse/healthcare professional immediately. They will arrange to have the catheter replaced.

**Q: How much fluid and what type of fluid should I drink?**

You need to drink an adequate amount of fluid for your weight. Approximately between two litres and three litres per day is the usual recommendation unless advised otherwise by your healthcare professional.

If you are experiencing any problems with your catheter, limit your caffeine intake as this can sometimes make your bladder irritable and replace your usual fluid intake with water.

**Leg Bags**

There are many types of leg bags and choosing the right one to suit your lifestyle is important. Your healthcare professional will show you examples and give you advice on their use.

**Which Leg Bag?**

You should decide where on your leg you intend to wear your leg bag, as this will determine the length of the inlet tube required:

- Short tube - for use on the thigh
- Long tube – for use on the lower leg
- Adjustable - for extra length (sheath patients only)

Men who use a sheath may cut the tube to a specific length and a spare connector is included in the pack. Tubes should not be cut if attaching to a catheter, as this can increase the risk of infection.
There are various capacities of leg bags available. If you are going out for the evening and would like a more discrete bag then you have the option to choose a smaller capacity leg bag.

- 350ml - for an evening out a smaller bag can be used. This would require emptying more often but would offer greater discretion.
- 500ml - normal every day use.
- 750ml - for long journeys, or where toilet access is restricted.

It is not uncommon for some patients to alternate between different capacity bags according to their daily routines. (Discuss this choice with your Nurse).

**Securing your leg bag**

For your comfort and security, there are a number of options available to ensure the bag is securely attached to your leg. Depending upon which option you find most comfortable then you can choose from the following:

**Bag Sleeves and Catheter Retaining Straps**

Each box of ten leg bags includes one pair of high-quality, latex-free elastic straps. The straps are of unequal length, with the shorter strap designed to fit on the bottom of the bag to give optimum support for the leg bag for a calf-worn leg bag, the upper strap is designed to fit in a figure-of-eight around the knee.

Sleeves provide a popular alternative method of supporting the leg bag. It is manufactured from a soft fabric and completely encases the leg bag to hold it comfortably against the leg for maximum support and security. The sleeve has a small opening for the tap so that it is easy to empty and also helps to position the leg bag in the sleeve (as shown below).

It is particularly good if you have frail skin, or problems with straps digging into or rubbing against your leg as it distributes the weight of the urine more uniformly.
Catheter Retaining Strap

A urine drainage system can be subject to movement, which can lead to tension on the catheter or sheath, especially as the bag becomes fuller at night.

A retaining strap which secures the leg bag tubing or catheter firmly and comfortably against the leg. This acts as a shock absorber against any sudden movement, minimising risk of urethral pain, trauma or leaking as it stops the catheter from being accidentally pulled.

There are two sizes available on prescription; and adult size to fit most legs, and an abdominal size that first around the waist to hold a supra-pubic catheter (which may also be cut to size to fit larger limbs).

Changing a leg bag

You should change your leg bag every 5 -7 days. Always ensure that each time you change or empty your leg bag, you wash your hands with warm soapy water and wipe them dry (before and after).

1. Pinch off the catheter using the thumbs and forefinger.
2. Avoid touching the ends of any connecting tube. Remove the drainage bag tubing from the catheter, twisting the bag connector gently as you do this.
3. Remove the protective cap from the new bag and immediately insert the drainage bag tube into the catheter. Replace the protective cap onto the old bag.
4. Secure the new bag using the chosen method of support. Empty urine from the old drainage bag into the toilet or receptacle.
Questions about Leg Bags

How often should change my leg bag?

A leg bag should be changed every 5-7 days. However, it is recommended that if the leg bag becomes disconnected from the catheter you should use a new bag. If your leg bag is damaged or visibly dirty then you can change it sooner.

How often should I empty my leg bag?

Always wash your hands before and after you empty your leg bag. You should empty your leg bag directly into the toilet or receptacle when it is approximately half full, or sooner if it is uncomfortable on your leg. To avoid the risk of infection or bacteria entering the leg bag, do not let the tip touch the seat or bowl of the toilet.
What should I do if my leg bag is not filling with urine?

If you notice that the urine bag is not filing as it normally would then you may have a kink in the leg bag tubing. Check to see whether the tubing has kinked and if so straighten the tubing. If it is not the tubing, then should consult you healthcare professional/ District Nurse.

Night Bags

For a more peaceful night’s sleep, your leg bag should be attached to a 2-litre capacity drainage bag to ensure free flow of urine throughout the night.

There are two types of 2-litre night bags available; drainable and non-drainable. Drainable bags can be reused for up to 5-7 nights, whereas non-drainable bags are used once and then disposed of. Many healthcare professionals recommended using disposable night bags.

Attaching a night bag to your leg bag

Overnight, a 2-litre bag should be connected to the tap of your leg bag. This avoids you having to get up to empty your leg bag during the night.

Always ensure you wash your hands before and after connecting the night bag, and avoid touching the end of the inlet connector. Taking these simple precautions will help to prevent bacterial contamination.

For further information or advice, ask your District Nurse or Continence Adviser.

1. It is recommended that your leg bag is empty or has very little urine in it before attaching it to the night bag. Remove the protective cap from the 2-litre bag and store until morning.

2. Attach the connector at the top of the night bag to the outlet tube of the leg bag and check that the connection is secure. You may wish to loosen or remove the leg bag straps or sleeve.
3. Open the tap on the leg bag to allow the urine to drain into the larger bag.

4. Attach the 2-litre bag to a suitable night bag stand.

5. Wash your hands before removing the night bag. Close the tap on your leg bag and secure it to your leg. Gently twist the night bag connector away from the leg bag and empty the urine into a toilet. If it is a single use night bag ensure you dispose of it after emptying. If it is a 5-7 day, drainable night bag then you should put the protective cap back on the end and store ready for the next night.

Stands and hangers

To provide the ideal support for your bag at the bedside you can choose either a floor standing hanger or one designed to hook onto a suitable rail. Using a stand or hanger will help ensure the drainage tubing is correctly positioned to allow free flow of urine. Do not place the bag directly on the floor without a stand.
Your choice of hangers includes the following options:

- Disposable bedside hanger
- Plastic-coated metal bedside hanger
- Flat-pack stand
- Self-standing hanger

**Questions about Night Bags**

**Q: How often should I change my night bag?**

There are two types of night bag available. Non-drainable (single use) a new one must be used every night as the bag is torn to empty it. An alternative option is use a drainable night bag, which must be changed every 5-7 days or earlier if it becomes damaged or visibly dirty.

**Q: What should I do if the urine is not flowing from the leg bag into the night bag?**

First of all ensure you have opened the tap on the leg bag to enable the free flow of urine into the night bag. Secondly, check to ensure that there is no kinking in the tube, and finally ensure the night bag is below the level of the bladder. i.e. on a suitable night bag stand or hanger. If after this, the urine does not flow, then you should consult your healthcare professional/District Nurse.

**Q: How should I store bags?**

You should store unopened drainage bags in a cool, clean, dark place. Never remove the bags from the sterile peel pouch until ready for use. Any damaged or opened packages should not be used.

**Q: How and where should I dispose of my night bags?**

You can wrap your used bags in newspaper before putting them in the bin, or you can put them in a plastic disposal bag.

Please note: Do not flush bags down the toilet.
Catheter Valves

A catheter valve is a tap which is connected directly to the catheter outlet. It allows drainage of urine from the bladder to be controlled, whilst helping to maintain bladder muscle tone and a good capacity.

Catheter valves have been used for many years and are a popular alternative to wearing a urine drainage bag. They are easy to use, whilst offering the wearer discretion, comfort and independence.

Before using a catheter valve it is important you are assessed by your healthcare professional to ensure that a catheter valve is suitable for you.

Questions about Catheter Valves

Q: When can a catheter valve be used?

Catheter valves are used as an alternative to allowing urine to drain freely into a drainage bag and this management option is preferable for some people as it can offer more freedom and discretion.

Q: Who can use a catheter valve?

Catheter valves are not to be used in conjunction with a sheath. They are not suitable for everyone and you should ask you District Nurse or Continence Adviser for advice on whether a valve would be suitable for you. If you have recently had surgery on your bladder, have a low bladder capacity, experience bladder irritability, or unable to feel if your bladder is full, then a valve will not be suitable for you.

Q: How often should the catheter valve be changed?

The catheter valve should be changed every 5-7 days.
Q: **How often should I empty my bladder?**

It is very important you open the valve and empty your bladder at regular intervals, about every four hours during the day. If you do not empty the bladder regularly you might experience some abdominal discomfort as the bladder becomes full, or you may experience leakage of urine around the catheter.

Q: **Can I attach a night bag to the catheter valve?**

It is essential that the catheter valve is attached to a 2-litre bag during the night. Once the night bag is connected you should ensure the catheter valve is in the open position to allow for drainage.

**Useful Contacts**

Association for Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus (ASBAH)  
0845 450 7755  
[www.asbah.org](http://www.asbah.org)

The Back-up Trust  
020 8875 1805  
[www.backuptrust.org.uk](http://www.backuptrust.org.uk)

Bladder and Bowel Foundation  
01536 533255  
[www.bladderandbowelfoundation.org](http://www.bladderandbowelfoundation.org)

The Cystitis and Overactive Bladder Foundation  
01214761222  
[wwwInterstitialcystitis.co.uk](http://wwwInterstitialcystitis.co.uk)
The Disabled Living Foundation
Helpline: 0845 130 9177
Switchboard: 02072896111
www.dlf.org.uk

Multiple Sclerosis Society
0808 800 8000
www.mssociety.org.uk

Multiple Sclerosis Trust
01462 476 700
www.mstrust.org.uk

NHS Direct
0845 46 47
www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk

PromoCon
0161 834 2001
www.promocon2001.co.uk

The Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation (RADAR)
0207 250 3222
www.radar.org.uk

Spinal Injuries Association
0800 980 0501
www.spinal.co.uk
Your personal record

Please complete and update the record for your future reference. Everyone has access to healthcare professionals with a special interest in continence – they are your support network.

To ensure you know who they are, make sure you write their contact details in the space below.

Practitioner details

Doctor: .................................................................

Telephone number: ..................................................

District nurse: ..........................................................

Day time Telephone number: ......................................

Emergency out of hours Telephone number: ......................

Catheter details

Make: ...............................................................

Product code & Lot/Batch no. ................................................

Catheter balloon size: .....................................................

Date changed: ................................................................

Sheath details

Make: .......................................................................  

Size: ........................................................................

Product code: ..............................................................
Urine drainage bag details

Leg bag make: ..........................................................................

Size & tube length: ..................................................................

Product code: ..........................................................................

Night bag make: ......................................................................

Product code: ..........................................................................

Accessory details

Accessory type 1: ......................................................................

Product code: ..........................................................................

Accessory type 2: ......................................................................

Product code: ..........................................................................

Notes

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_________________________________________________________________
How to contact your District Nurse in Emergency

If you experience any problems with your catheter, please ring the Following District Nursing Number: 01495 745656.

For example, you will need to ring this number if your catheter is not draining or is blocked or if your catheter has (fallen or pulled) come out. **Always try to contact the District Nurses first before calling your GP or an ambulance to avoid going into hospital.** Your catheter problem is best dealt with at home instead of the Emergency Department in a hospital. While we are trying to avoid a hospital admission, there may be some rare cases when the District Nurse or GP will need to send you into hospital.
Your Checklist for Effective Management of your Catheter and Drainage System

To ensure you are confident in managing your catheter, sheath or leg bag when you arrive home, make sure you run through the checklist with your healthcare professional before you are discharged from hospital.

They will happily answer any questions or address any concerns you may have. When you feel comfortable with all the points listed below, simply tick the boxes and sign at the bottom of page.

Checklist for Catheters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.  Do you know why your catheter has been fitted?</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.  How and when to wash you hands (hand hygiene)</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.  Catheter hygiene (how to clean the catheter and entry site)</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.  How to connect the catheter to the drainage system</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.  What to do when your catheter needs changing?</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.  Have you been advised on your diet and fluid intake?</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.  What to do if you have a problem?</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Checklist for Sheaths

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How and when to wash your hands (hand hygiene)</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Do you know how often your sheath should be changed?</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Cleaning the penis ready for the sheath</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Putting on and taking off your sheath</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Connecting and disconnecting the sheath to a drainage bag</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Disposing of used sheaths</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Do you know how often you should see your nurse for a follow up?</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Checklist for Urine Drainage Bags

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Attaching &amp; disconnecting the bag from your catheter/sheath</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Is the bag in a comfortable position on your leg?</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Is your bag secured correctly on your leg?</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Linking your leg bag and night bag together</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. How to empty your leg bag and night bag</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. How often should you change your leg and night bag?</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Do you know how to obtain a night bag stand?</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. How to dispose of used bags</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Checklist for Accessories  Yes  No

1. Do you have the extra support for your catheter or leg bag tubing (G-Strap)  □  □
2. Wearing an additional leg bag support (AquaSleeve)  □  □

Checklist for Obtaining New Supplies  Yes  No

1. Home delivery service (see back page)  □  □
2. GP prescription  □  □

Agreement

I agree that all the points outlined above have been fully explained to me by my healthcare professional

Signed..........................................................  Date.................................

Signed..........................................................  Date.................................
Healthcare Professional