

Inserting Your Own Urinary Catheter



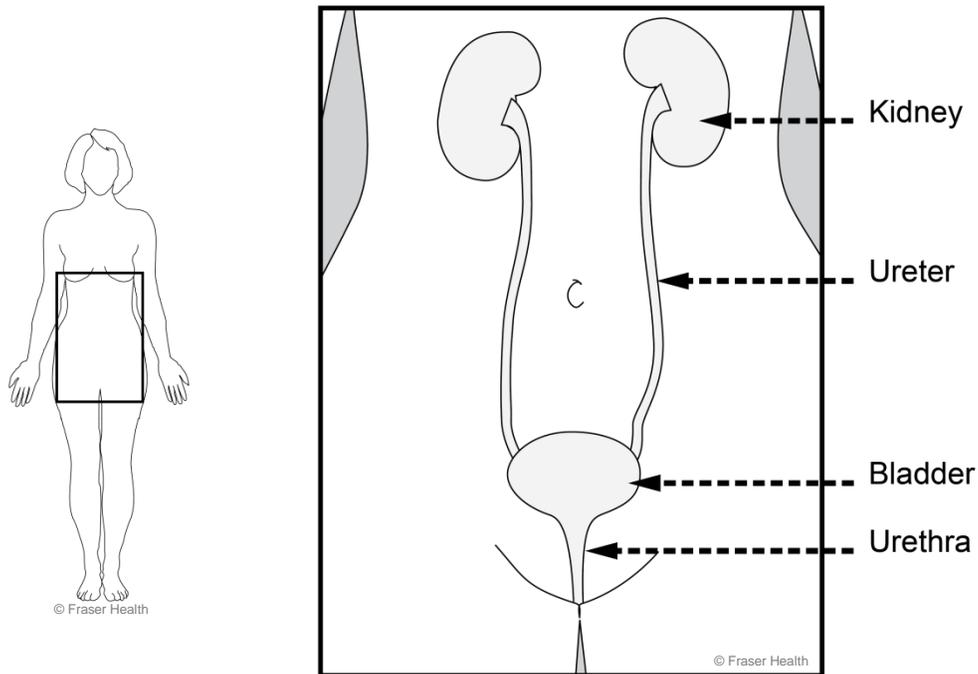
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Self-Catheterization Instructions for Women

Your family practitioner (family doctor or nurse practitioner) has told you that your bladder can not completely empty urine (pee) on its own. Because of this, you will need to learn how to drain the urine from your bladder to keep it from getting too full. We call this 'Self-Catheterization'.

The reason we want you to drain urine from your bladder regularly is to keep your kidneys and bladder healthy. It also decreases the chance of you getting a bladder or kidney infection.

To catheterize, a thin, flexible tube (a catheter) is put into your bladder through your urethra.



Urinary System - Female

My Self-Catheterization

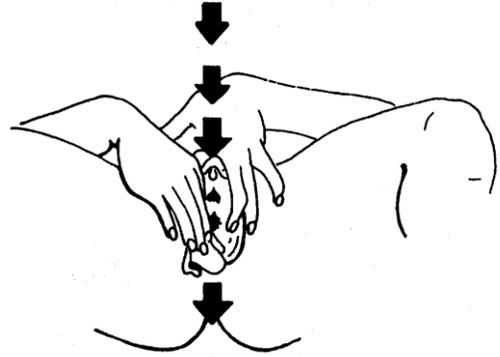
My catheter size _____ How often (frequency) _____
(ordered by your family practitioner)

Caring for Yourself

- Always wash your hands with soap and water before and after touching the urinary catheter.
- Shower every day, if you can.
- Every night, wash your genital area carefully with soap and water.
 - Always clean from front to back.
 - Clean between each skin fold of the labia.
 - Clean around the anus.
 - Rinse the soap off with a damp cloth.
 - Dry off with a clean towel.
- After every bowel movement (poop), wash yourself as described above.
- Drink 2 to 3 litres of fluids* each day such as water, milk, and herbal tea.

*People with heart or kidney problems should check with their family practitioner about the correct amount of fluid to drink each day.
- Avoid caffeine.

Caffeine makes you feel the need to urinate (go pee) more often and right away. Caffeine is in coffee, tea, colas, energy drinks, and chocolate. It is best to check product labels.
- Review your medications with your family practitioner and/or home care nurse to see if any medication affects how your bladder works.



How often do you need to insert the catheter?

Talk with your family practitioner about how often you should do self-catheterizations. It depends on your lifestyle and amount of urine your bladder can hold. It is important to have a regular schedule to empty your bladder.

When you can, try to urinate before you catheterize. The urine left in your bladder afterwards is called 'residual urine'.

- If you drain more than 400 mL at a time, you should self-catheterize more often. You want to avoid your bladder from becoming too full. For example, increase the number of catheterizations from every 6 hours to every 4 hours.
- If you drain less than 200mL at a time, you can increase the amount of time between catheterizations. For example, decrease the number of catheterizations from every 4 hours to every 6 hours.
- If you drain less than 100 ml regularly, you might be able to stop doing self-catheterization. Always check with your family practitioner before you stop self-catheterizing.

Note: If you are catheterizing yourself **more than 6 times in 24 hours**, contact your family practitioner or home care nurse.

Signs your bladder is too full:

- feeling restless
- sweating
- chills
- headache
- looking flushed or pale
- cold fingers, toes, arms, or legs
- lower part of your abdomen looks bloated

If you have any of these feelings, catheterize as soon as you can.

When should you get help?

Ongoing problems catheterizing

Speak to your family practitioner and/or home care nurse if you have ongoing problems catheterizing yourself, such as:

- problems controlling or coordinating your hands to insert the catheter yourself
- problems with your vision
- problems with your body being flexible enough to get into the right position to insert the catheter (stiffness, pain)

If problems continue, you might need to see a bladder doctor (urologist) or other health provider.

Infection

Even though we say that self-catheterization can help prevent infections, there is a chance it can cause an infection. Infection is more likely if you skip steps or have problems doing the catheterization.

Call your home care nurse or family practitioner if you notice **any** of the following:

- Your urine has a foul smell or changes in colour.
- The skin around where the catheter enters your body is red, swollen, or tender.
- You have chills or a fever over 37.8°C (100°F).
- You generally feel unwell or tired.
- You have changes in the way you think **and** this is new for you.
- You have new pain in your bladder area and/or in your back (below your ribs).
- You live with a spinal cord injury and notice **any** of the following:
 - one or more of the signs listed above
 - more muscle spasms than usual
 - a headache
 - a feeling of sickness in your stomach
 - a feeling of tiredness even after sleeping

Urgent problems

Go to your nearest Emergency if you have **any** of the following:

- severe pain in the back (below your ribs)
- bleeding from your urethra that does not stop
- cannot catheterize and have uncomfortably full bladder

If you cannot contact your family practitioner and/or home care nurse, call **8-1-1** (HealthLinkBC) to speak to a registered nurse any time - day or night.

Available in 130 languages.

For an interpreter, say your language in English. Wait until an interpreter comes on the phone.

Supplies you need at home

You will need to buy your catheter supplies. You can buy them from a medical supply store. Ask your family practitioner, or home care nurse for locations in your area.

Some health insurance plans might cover the cost of your supplies so it is important to check with them.

If you don't have a thermometer, we suggest you buy one so you can check your temperature if needed.

Shopping list

Make sure you have the following supplies in your home:

- urinary catheters
- water-based lubricant (such as K-Y Jelly, available in tube or individual packets – **no Vaseline**)
- cleaner (disinfectant) to clean sink or work area
- liquid dish soap
- rubber gloves or disposable gloves (optional)

Always keep 2 or 3 clean or sterile catheters on hand at all times.

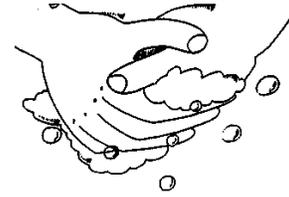
We recommend Sunlight® dish soap because it rinses off well and is biodegradable.

Other supplies

- a clean container to empty the urine into
- clean storage container for catheter such as a zip-lock bag
- clean towels or paper towels
- toilet paper
- bar soap or body wash

How to do Self-Catheterizations

1. Prepare your work area by cleaning the sink, counter, and sink taps with cleaner (disinfectant).
2. Wash your hands with soap and water.
Tip: Keep your nails short and clean at all times.



3. Get your supplies ready and place on your clean work area:
 - clean catheter
 - clean storage container for catheter such as a zip lock bag
 - clean towels or paper towels
 - liquid dish soap
 - water-soluble lubricant (**no** Vaseline)
 - clean container to empty urine into (only if you need to measure your residual urine or for when you are not near a toilet)



4. Try to urinate first before doing self-catheterization.
5. Choose a comfortable position (standing, sitting, or lying down).



Sitting forwards on a chair



Sitting backwards on the toilet with a mirror between the lid and seat



Sitting on a toilet facing forward with a mirror on a low stool



Standing beside the toilet with one foot resting on the rim

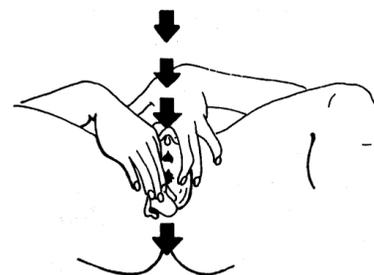
Lying in bed with:

- pillows behind your neck and back
- legs bent
- ankles touching each other
- knees apart

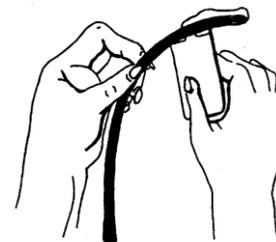
Prop a make-up mirror with lights or a magnifying mirror on the bed.



6. Wash your genital area with soap and water.
 - Clean from front to back.
 - Clean between each skin fold of the labia.
 - Clean around the anus.
 - Rinse the soap off with a damp cloth.
 - Dry off with a clean towel.

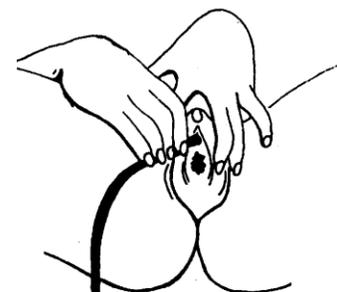


7. Put some water soluble lubricant on the last 5 centimetres (2 inches) of the urinary catheter. (This makes it easier to insert)



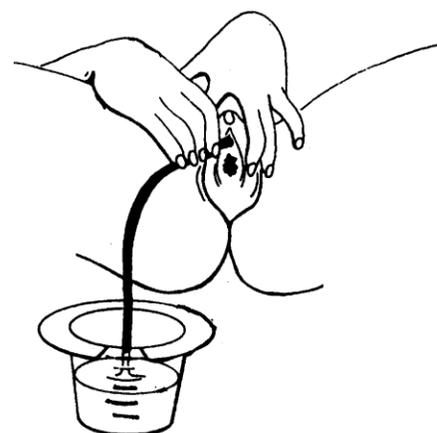
8. Get into a position that is best for you.
9. Position the open end of the catheter over the toilet or a clean container.
Do not let the end touch anything.

10. Separate your labia using your thumb and middle finger of your left hand. (Reverse if left-handed)
11. Locate the urethral opening using the index finger of your left hand. A mirror might also help.



12. Lift your index finger.
Using your right hand, hold the catheter 1.5 to 2.5 centimetres (½ to 1 inch) from the tip.
Insert it gently into your urethra using an upward motion.

13. Push the catheter in until urine begins to flow. Insert it a further 1.5 centimeters (½ inch). Hold in place using your left hand.



- Note: Never force the catheter.** If the catheter feels like something is stopping if from moving up, stop for a moment. Try to relax by pretending to urinate. Then slide it in 1.5 centimetres (½ inch) deeper.
14. Allow all of the urine to drain from your bladder into the toilet or clean container.

15. When the urine stops flowing, gently and **slowly** take the catheter out of your urethra. (This is so you don't dribble urine on your clothing.

If the urine begins to flow again as you are taking the catheter out, stop and wait for the urine to stop flowing. Then slowly take the catheter out.

16. Using toilet paper, wipe from front to back.

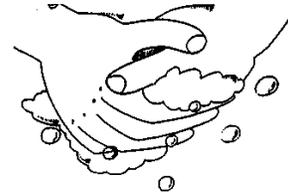
17. If tracking residual urine, measure the amount of urine in the clean container.

Empty the container into the toilet and flush.

Rinse the container with warm water.

18. To reuse the catheter, wash it with soap and water.

19. If told to use a new catheter each time, place the catheter in a bag and tie or seal shut before throwing it in the garbage.



20. Wash your hands.

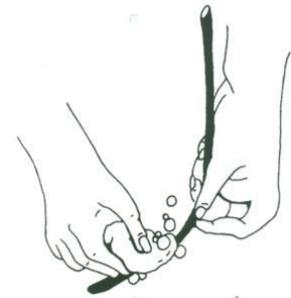
Cleaning the Catheter

Catheters can be reused if kept clean. Each catheter can be used for 1 to 2 weeks. If it becomes damaged, it should be thrown away and replaced with a new one.

If reusing your catheter, wash the catheter right after you have used it. However, it is best to not clean your catheter in public washrooms. If needing to catheterize in a public washroom, throw the catheter away.

Steps to clean:

1. Wash your hands with soap and water.
2. Fill a container or sink with warm water.
3. Wash your catheter with liquid dish soap and warm water.
4. Rinse the catheter well inside and out with warm water.
5. Dry the catheter off with a clean towel.
6. To completely air dry, place the catheter on a clean surface, covered with paper towel or clean towel.
7. Clean up your work area.
8. Wash your hands with soap and water.
9. When dry, put the catheter in your clean storage container such as a zip lock bag.



Going out or travelling

Make a travel kit to take with you when you go out or when you travel.

How much you take depends on how long you will be away. For example, if you go away for the day, you can carry what you need in a zip-lock bag, toiletry bag, or small bag. If you go away for longer, carry what you need in a shopping bag, backpack, gym bag, or suitcase.

If you prefer, you can buy a closed system self-catheter kit (includes a catheter, lubricant, and collection bag) to use when travelling.

Your travel kit should include:

- a supply of catheters in separate plastic bags
- a zip-lock bag to store the catheter in
- non-scented, throw away wipes
- water-soluble lubricant
- masking tape
- plastic grocery-type bags

(the number depends on how long you will be away)

If using individual packages, 1 package for every catheterization

For situations where there is no counter available to place your catheter while you get ready. Instead, tape your catheter package to the wall of a toilet stall.

Place the used catheter in the bag.
Tie the bag shut before placing in the garbage.

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This information does not replace the advice given to you by your healthcare provider.

Catalogue #251612 (May 2017)

To order: patienteduc.fraserhealth.ca

