HSC Public Health Agency

Living with a urinary catheter



A guide for patients and carers

About this booklet

This booklet aims to answer any questions you might have about your catheter. It is yours to keep and refer to when you need. There are also step-by-step instructions included with items such as G straps and catheter sleeves, but if you have any other questions, talk to your nurse (details on back).

What is a urinary catheter?

A catheter is a tube that drains urine (pee) from your bladder when you can't empty it yourself.

Why do I need one?

There may be several reasons why you need a catheter, for example:

- if you have trouble emptying your bladder;
- before or after surgery;
- to prevent urine leaks when other options don't work.

Your healthcare team will tell you:

- why you need the catheter;
- if it will be short term or long term;
- when it is likely to be removed;
- who to contact if you need help or in an emergency.

How often is it changed?

- **Short term:** the catheter can stay in place for up to 4 weeks (but can be changed sooner if recommended).
- **Long term:** the catheter can stay in place for up to 12 weeks.

If you had the catheter fitted in hospital and you have been discharged, a nurse will change your catheter in your home or in a clinic, depending on your need.

When leaving hospital, you should receive a spare catheter, information and other items that could include:

- drainage bags
- 2 leg bags
- night bags
- straps (such as a 'G strap' or a catheter sleeve) to secure the catheter in place and prevent it rubbing or slipping
- a stand for the night bag.

You can get an ongoing supply of this equipment as a repeat prescription.

If you are a man and have a Tiemann tip catheter, please let your healthcare professional know as this may affect where you get your catheter changed.



Items in your catheter pack

Emptying and changing a leg bag – see images 1-10 below

- Wear this during the day.
- Keep it below the level of your bladder.
- Empty it when it is two-thirds full.
- Open the tap to drain into the toilet or a clean container and dry the outlet.
- Do not let the bag or tap touch the toilet or floor.
- Replace the leg bag every week (or if it becomes detached).
- You might need to ask for help, especially when getting started.

1. Wash your hands with soap and water and dry thoroughly



2. Loosen the lower strap of the leg bag



3. Empty the contents of the leg bag into the toilet or a container. Do not let the end of the drainage tube touch the toilet or container



4. Wash your hands again



5. Attach clean straps to the new leg bag. Use towels or wipes to protect clothes from leaks



6. Pinch the catheter to prevent excess urine leaking out, then remove the leg bag



7. Remove the protective cap from the end of the new leg bag



8. Do not touch the end tip of the leg bag



9. Push the tip of the leg bag into the end of the catheter



10. Secure the new leg bag to your leg. Place the old leg bag into a bag and put in the bin



Using a night bag – see images 11-20 below

- Connect the night bag to the leg bag before going to bed.
- Keep it on the stand provided.
- Empty and dispose of the night bag in the household waste.
- Use a new night bag every night.

11. Wash hands with soap and water and dry thoroughly



12. Loosen the lower strap of the leg bag



13. Empty the contents of the leg drainage bag into a toilet or container



14. Wash hands again



15. Gently remove the protective cap from the night drainage bag



16. Do not touch the end tip of the night drainage bag



17. Push the tip of the night bag tubing into the leg bag port



18. Open the leg bag valve to allow urine to drain from the leg bag into the night bag overnight



19. Attach the night bag to a catheter stand



20. Wash your hands again



How to use your catheter valve

If your healthcare professional has advised you to use a catheter valve instead of a leg bag, follow these steps.

Open the valve:

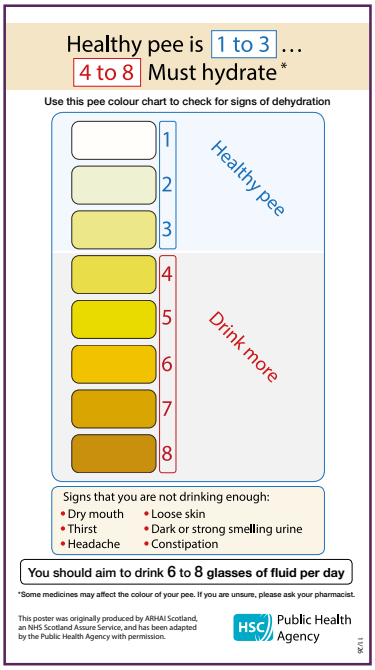
- when your bladder feels full;
- every 3 to 4 hours;
- before bowel movements (doing a poo).

Attach a night bag before bed and leave the valve open. Replace the catheter valve every week.

Living with a catheter

Eating and drinking

- It is important to stay hydrated. Aim to drink 6 to 8 glasses of fluids daily (unless told otherwise).
- Limit caffeine and fizzy drinks (these can irritate the bladder).
- Eat fibre-rich foods to prevent constipation. Aim to eat 5 to 7 portions of fruit or vegetables a day.



Personal hygiene

- Wash your hands before and after touching the catheter.
- Clean the skin around the catheter twice daily with mild soap and warm water, taking care not to pull or tug on the catheter.
- Clean the catheter tubing downwards, away from body.
- Avoid creams and powders near the catheter.
- Men: wash under your foreskin and replace it. Gently pull back the foreskin to clean and then return to its normal position.
- Women: wash the area front to back.
- If you notice an unusual discharge or unpleasant smell, contact your nurse.

Activity and holidays

- Exercise helps your catheter drain.
- Swimming is fine if the catheter is secure. You can use a catheter spigot to temporarily close your urinary catheter, if advised by your nurse.
- Take spare supplies when you are travelling.
- Ask your nurse about using a catheter valve on holiday.
- For airport security or customs, ask for a letter from your GP confirming that your equipment is essential medical supplies. You can also ask for a 'Sunflower' lanyard to signal that you have a hidden disability. Scan the QR code or follow the link for more information. https://hdsunflower.com/uk

SCAN ME

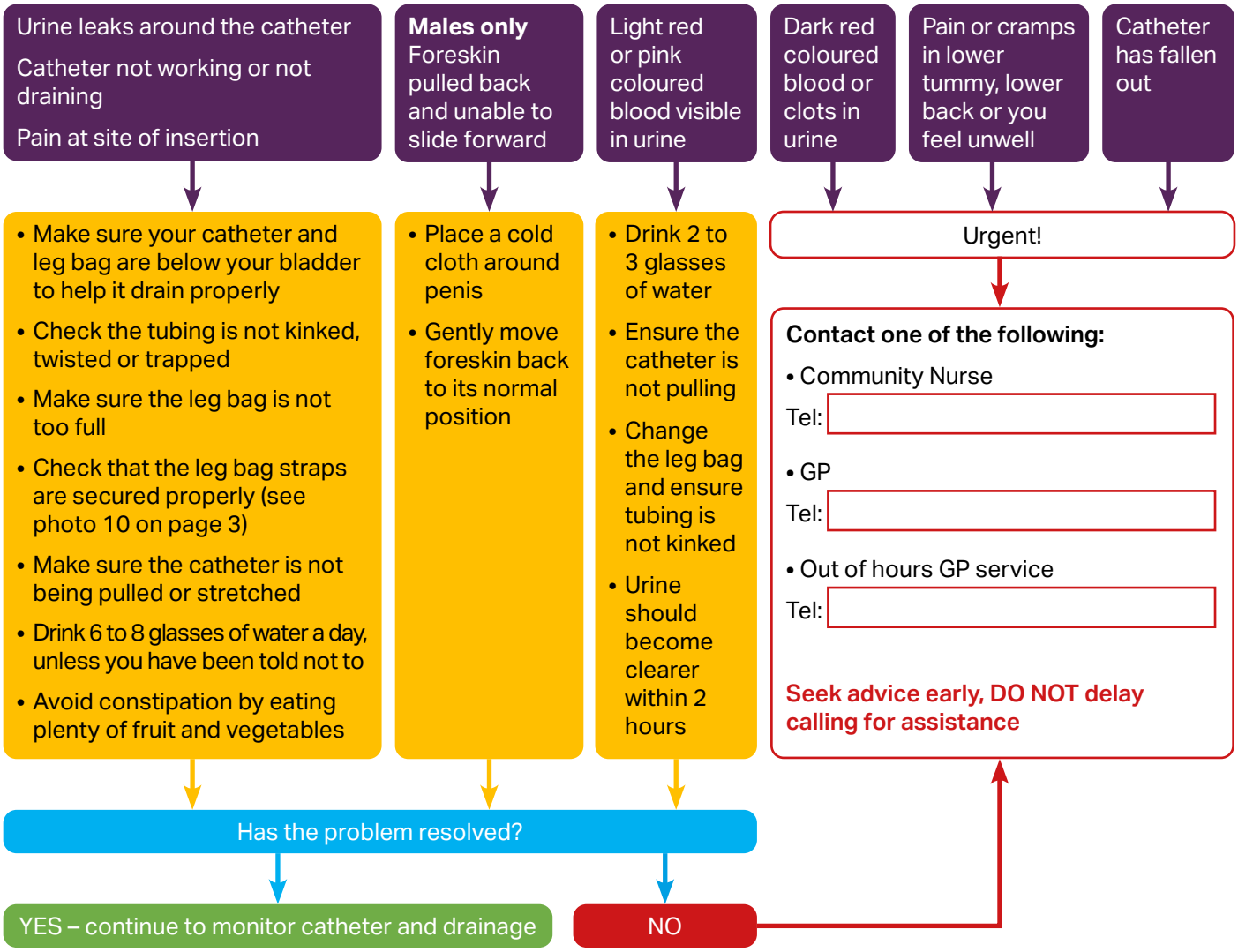
Sexual activity

Sexual activity is still possible with a catheter. Just make sure:

- the bag is empty first;
- women: secure tube on your tummy;
- men: fold the catheter along your penis and use a condom;
- maintain personal care after intercourse.

Talk to your nurse if you have any more questions, it's nothing to be embarrassed about.

Common problems and what to do



If you are still having problems, try removing the straps from the leg bag. Raise the bag above the level of your bladder for 20 seconds. This might help clear any fragments in the bladder that could have entered the drainage holes at the tip of the catheter.

My catheter details

(to be completed with your nursing team)

Patient's name

Reason for urinary catheter?

Date first inserted (____/____/____)

Where catheter was first inserted (home, hospital or community)

Site of catheter (please circle) **Urethral** ◯ **Supra-pubic** ◯

Size of catheter (cm)

Type of catheter (please circle): **Short term (4 weeks)** ◯ **or** **Long term (12 weeks)** ◯

Length of catheter (please circle) **Female** ◯ **Male** ◯

Date of trial removal of catheter, if recommended (____/____/____)

Contact

✆ **Community nursing contact (office hours)**

✆ **Community nursing contact (outside office hours)**

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HSC Public Health Agency

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