



How do I Care for My Indwelling or Foley Catheter?

Why is daily catheter care important?

An indwelling, or Foley catheter is a thin, flexible drainage tube that drains your urine when you are unable to empty your bladder independently. The catheter is attached to a drainage bag which collects the urine. This is considered a “closed system,” which means that there are no openings from your urinary bladder to the drainage bag.

It is important to maintain this closed system to keep bacteria and other germs from entering your urinary system and causing an infection. Your urinary system is normally sterile and having an indwelling catheter in the bladder creates a way for bacteria to easily enter your body. Daily cleansing of both the catheter and the area where the catheter enters your body (called the urethral meatus) is important to decrease the chances of getting a urinary tract infection.

Cleansing is also important after each bowel movement to prevent infection.

How do I clean around the catheter?

Gather all of the supplies needed for your catheter care, including soap, and two clean washcloths. You may use a basin of clean warm water, a clean sink with running warm water, or these steps can be performed in the course of a shower.

Instructions:

1. Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water before and after cleaning and touching the catheter, drainage bag, or urine.
2. Apply soap and water to one washcloth and thoroughly clean the area around the meatus then rinse well to remove all soap. Rinse the washcloth, apply more soap, and clean the rest of the area between your legs and buttocks. For female patients, it is important to wipe from front to back to prevent an infection. For male patients, it is important to begin at the tip of the penis and wash downward toward the body.
3. Rinse and pat dry the area well with the towel.
4. Change the water in the basin and clean the catheter next
5. Apply soap to the second washcloth.
6. Firmly grasp the catheter to prevent tugging on it and gently wash the tubing. Begin at the meatus and wash the first 2 to 3 inches of the tube, moving away from the body toward the drainage bag. **DO NOT** wash from the tubing toward the body because this may push bacteria into the meatus.
7. Gently remove any drainage or crusting that may be present on the tube. Gently dry the tubing.
8. Do not use any powders in this area
9. After cleansing, the catheter should be secured to prevent irritation around the meatus and to prevent pulling the catheter out.
 - a. For females, secure the catheter to the inner thigh.
 - b. For males, secure the catheter to the lower part of the abdomen, or secure to either thigh when walking.

How do I empty the drainage bag?

Your drainage bag should be emptied, at a minimum, two to three times a day. The bag should not be allowed to become full. This will put pressure on the catheter and cause tugging and irritation at the meatus. It also will be too heavy and bulky to carry around. Instructions:

1. Wash your hands before and after emptying the bag
2. The bag should be kept below the level of the hip (bladder) at all times to prevent urine from flowing back into the tubing and into the bladder
3. Use a clean container to empty urine into if your doctor wants you to measure the amounts in the drainage bag. Otherwise, you can also empty the bag directly into the toilet.
4. Carefully open the spigot (pour spout) at the bottom of the bag to empty. Do not allow the spigot to touch the container or toilet. This causes contamination of the bag with bacteria.

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Caring for Indwelling or Foley Catheter –continued-

5. Clean the end of the spigot with rubbing alcohol on a gauze pad or cotton ball.
6. Close the spigot securely to prevent leaking.
7. Do not allow the drainage bag to rest on the floor.

How do I change my drainage bag?

The drainage bag should be replaced at least monthly, or more frequently if there is clouding, odor, or discoloration of the bag. Depending upon your activity level, you may choose to use a leg bag during the day for greater mobility. To change the bag:

1. Wash your hands before and after changing the bag.
2. Disconnect the catheter from the drainage bag/leg bag tubing, being careful not to tug on the catheter end. Avoid touching the tube or catheter ends as you disconnect them.
3. Clean the ends of the drainage bag tubing and catheter with rubbing alcohol on either a gauze pad or cotton ball. Also clean the tubing end of the replacement bag (if it is not a new, sterile bag).
4. Connect the new/replacement bag tubing to the catheter snugly to prevent leaking.
5. Clean the connection site again with alcohol.
6. Cap the tubing end of the bag not in use.

How do I clean my drainage bag?

If you are using a leg bag during the day, the drainage bag should be cleaned in the morning when changing to the leg bag, and the leg bag should be cleaned at night when changing back to the drainage bag.

Bleach solution method (preferred):

1. Wash your hands before and after cleaning the bag.
2. Disconnect the drainage bag from the catheter. Use a soft, plastic squirt bottle to rinse the drainage bag tubing and bag with tap water and drain.
3. Mix a solution of 1 part bleach to 10 parts tap water. This would be 1 tablespoon of bleach to 5 ounces of water (a little over ½ a cup). Pour the bleach solution into the drainage bag tubing and bag. Agitate for 30 seconds and drain the solution out of the bag. Allow to air dry.

Alternate vinegar solution method if bleach solution cannot safely be handled:

1. Wash your hands before and after cleaning the bag.
2. Disconnect the drainage bag from the catheter. Use a soft, plastic squirt bottle to rinse the drainage bag tubing and bag with tap water and drain.
3. Mix a solution of 1 part vinegar to 3 parts tap water. This would be ½ cup of vinegar to 1 & ½ cups of tap water.
4. Pour the vinegar solution into the drainage bag tubing and bag. Agitate for 30 seconds and drain the solution out of the bag. Allow to air dry.

Questions?

If you have questions about your catheter or any other issues, call our nurse help line (406) 728-3366, option 3.

Sources: Emr, K, & Ryan, R. (2004). Best practice for indwelling catheter in the home setting. *Home Healthcare Nurse*, 22(12), National Library of Medicine/MedlinePlus @ www.nlm.nih.gov

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