

2014

# Intermittent Clean Catheterization for Women

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## What is intermittent catheterization?

Intermittent catheterization is a way to drain urine (pee) from your bladder at different times. A small tube (catheter) is passed through the urethra (where urine comes out) into the bladder to drain the urine.

## Why do I need to use a catheter?

Your bladder may not empty completely when you go to the bathroom, or it may not be able to hold all the urine. Catheterization keeps you dry, prevents infection, and keeps your bladder and kidneys healthy.

## How do I put my catheter in?

- Try to empty your bladder before the catheterization if you can.
- Gather the supplies:
  - › Female catheter size: \_\_\_\_\_
  - › Wash cloth
  - › Soap and water
  - › Container to collect urine
  - › Water-based lubricating jelly such as Muko® or K-Y® Jelly. **Never use Vaseline® (petroleum jelly)**
  - › Paper towel or hand towel
  - › Mirror (may help you in find the opening)

- Wash both hands with soap and water. Rinse and dry with a clean towel.
- Have the container ready to collect urine.
- If you are able, sit on or stand by the toilet.
- Squeeze a dab of jelly onto a paper towel or clean hand towel. Roll the rounded end of the catheter in the jelly, covering about 2 inches.
- With one hand, separate your labia (folds of skin that protect the urethra and vagina). You can use a mirror to help you at first. Wash the area well with a soapy wash cloth using downward strokes. Keeping the labia open with your thumb and middle (3rd) finger, use your index (2nd) finger to feel for the meatus (opening for urine to pass out of your body). You will feel a sort of cleft (dimple or hood) and under that is the urinary opening (meatus). Keep your finger on that spot.
- While you continue to hold your labia with your first hand, use your other hand to hold the catheter about 3 inches from the end. Touch the tip to the end of your index finger, which is marking the “spot” and gently guide the catheter into the urinary opening.

- You usually need to insert (put in) the catheter about 3 inches before the urine will start to flow freely. The catheter may be more difficult to push just before it goes into the bladder. This is normal. It can be caused by muscle spasm. If the catheter is not going in easily, try to relax and breathe deeply. As you breathe in, continue to push the catheter until it has passed this point and enters the bladder.
- Move the end of the catheter towards the container or toilet and let the urine flow.
- When the flow of urine stops, slowly take out the catheter. If urine starts to flow again, stop taking out the catheter until all the urine has finished flowing. Pinch the catheter closed and take it out.
- Be sure to note the amount of urine in the container before you empty it.

## Care of the catheter

- Wash the catheter with either liquid dish soap and water or a mixture of vinegar and water.
- Rinse well inside and out and air dry. Place in catheter container (toothbrush holder). If you can't wash the catheter right away, put it in a Ziploc® bag and clean it later. Catheters **do not have to be boiled** before each use. **This is a clean procedure, but not a sterile one.**
- A catheter can be used many times. Do not re-use the catheter if it looks old, brittle, worn, or cracked.

## Important points

- You should try to empty your bladder often. Waiting too long to empty your bladder can lead to an infection, a stretched bladder, or urine leakage. Never wait to empty your bladder for any reason (For example, not having any soap and water).
- Cleanliness is very important. On the rare occasion when you cannot wash right away, your bladder's natural resistance to bacteria may protect you from getting an infection. Always have your catheter supplies with you when you are away from home in case of an emergency or a change of plans.

## **Call your doctor or nurse if:**

- › You have a fever
  - › You see a change in the colour of your urine
  - › You notice a smell
  - › Your urine becomes cloudy
  - › You see a change in the amount of your urine
  - › You have burning or discomfort along the urethra
  - › You have any trouble inserting the catheter (such as pain or bleeding)
- If you have any of the symptoms listed above, throw away your catheter and use a new one.
  - If you have been to the Urology Clinic and have any questions about intermittent clean catheterization, please call the Department of Urology at \_\_\_\_\_. A urologist or registered nurse will be able to help you.

**If you need to see a doctor, please contact your family doctor or go to the nearest Emergency Department unless otherwise instructed by your Urologist.**

If you have any questions, please ask.  
We are here to help you.

