

Urinary Catheter Care

A urinary catheter is a thin flexible hollow tube which drains urine from the bladder into a drainage bag. It is inserted either into the urethra or through a hole made in the abdomen (suprapubic). The catheter is held in place by a small balloon filled with sterile water.

At least 23% of all infections are due to a urinary tract infection (UTI) and of those, 80% are due to the use of urinary catheters. All service users with urinary catheter are at increased risk of acquiring a UTI and the longer a catheter is in place the greater the risk. Good infection control practices are essential to prevent infection. It is also important that the need for the urinary catheter should be reviewed by a registered nurse on a regular basis.



Catheter Hygiene

Routine personal hygiene for service users, such as a daily bath or shower, is important to maintain catheter hygiene. For service users that are unable to bathe or shower, staff should wash the genital area including around the catheter at least twice daily with soap and water. For female service users, it is important to wash the genital area from front to back to prevent contamination from the anal area.

Emptying the Catheter Bag

A catheter drainage bag should not be emptied more often than necessary as this increases the risk of infection. However, the bag must be emptied before it becomes completely full to avoid back flow of urine into the bladder. A service user has an increase of risk of acquiring an infection when the catheter bag is emptied. Therefore, it is essential to follow good practice.

- Before emptying the bag, always wash hands and wear a disposable apron and gloves.
- In a healthcare setting, the tap on the drainage bag should be wiped with an alcohol wipe before opening the tap and after closure, to reduce the risk of transmission of infection. In a service user's own home, a clean tissue should be used to wipe the tap after closure to prevent drips.
- Empty the urine into a container by opening the drainage tap.
- In a healthcare setting, the container should be single use and disposable or if re-usable, washed in an automated bed pan washer after each use. In a service user's own home, the container can be used again after washing with detergent and warm water and dried with a disposable paper towel e.g. kitchen roll.
- Avoid contact between the tap on the drainage bag and the container to prevent contamination and infection.
- Urine should be disposed of into a sluice or toilet.
- Remove disposable apron and gloves and wash hands.



Changing a Catheter Bag

Catheter bags, including leg bags, should be sterile and changed accordingly to the manufacturer's instructions, usually weekly. A service user has an increased risk of acquiring an infection when the catheter bag is changed. Therefore, it is essential to follow good practice.

- Before changing the bag, always wash hands and wear a disposable apron and gloves.
- When detaching the used bag from the catheter, to prevent contamination and infection, do not touch the end of the catheter.
- When removing the cap from the new catheter bag tube, to prevent contamination and infection, do not touch the end of the tube.
- Empty the urine from the bag and dispose of the bag as non-infectious/offensive waste. In a service user's own home, double wrap the bag and dispose of as household waste.
- Remove disposable apron and gloves and wash hands.
- Always record when catheter bag is changed.



Overnight Drainage Bags

If a service user has a leg bag during the day and additional larger linked drainage bag (night bag) should be used for overnight use. The night bag should be attached to the leg bag to keep the original system intact.

- Always wash hands and wear disposable apron and gloves when attaching a night bag.
- Attach the night bag to a stand to ensure that the drainage tap is not touching the floor, to prevent contamination of the tap.
- In a healthcare setting, wipe the leg bag drainage tap with an alcohol wipe to reduce the transmission of infection. In a service user's own home, it is not necessary to wipe the tap.
- When removing the cap from the new night bag tube, to prevent contamination and infection, do not touch the end before attaching it to the drainage tap on the leg bag.
- Remove disposable apron and gloves and wash hands.
- Night bags are single use only and should be disposed of on removal and should not be used again.

Test your knowledge

<i>Please tick the correct answer</i>	True	False
1. All service users with a urinary catheter are at risk of acquiring a urinary tract infection.		
2. Night bags are single use and should not be used again.		
3. Leg bags should be changed monthly.		

Remember:

- When changing a catheter bag, to prevent contamination and infection, do not touch the end of the catheter or tube.
- When emptying a catheter bag, always avoid contact between the tap on the drainage bag and the container.
- Night drainage bags are single use only.
- Wear a disposable apron and gloves when emptying a catheter bag.

Factsheet Activity *Please tick appropriate box when activity has been completed*

In a healthcare setting, check the container used for emptying catheter bags are single use and disposable or re-usable containers are washed in an automated bed pan washer after each use.	
In the service users own home, check that the container are washed with detergent and warm water and dried with a disposable paper towel after each use.	