

# Foley Catheter Care-Women

## What is a Foley catheter?

A Foley catheter is a soft plastic tube that is inserted into the bladder to drain urine. There is a balloon on the end of the catheter that holds it in place. With the catheter in place, you do not have to use the toilet to urinate. The catheter may remain in place for days or weeks depending on why your physician feels it is necessary.

A long term or “indwelling” urethral catheter is left in place for a period of time and is attached to a drainage bag to collect the urine. The bag should be emptied when it is more than one-half full. (Do not let the bag become completely filled.)

During the day, a leg bag is worn on the upper leg, if you are wearing a dress or a skirt, and worn on your calf if you are wearing pants. Use the leg bag when you are up and moving around during the day. If you’re resting for a few hours and at night time, you should use the night bag to avoid overflow and infection.

## Caring for Your Catheter

- Care of the indwelling catheter **must** include daily cleansing of the urethral area where the catheter exits the body and the catheter itself with soap and water.
- Do not pull on the catheter. Keep the catheter tube taped or tied to your leg to prevent accidental pulling on the catheter.
- Always keep the urine drainage bag below the level of your bladder. This prevents urine from running back into your bladder and reduces your chances of getting a bladder infection.
- DO NOT puncture, cut, or clamp the catheter.
- Drink 6 to 8 glasses of water a day, unless you are on a fluid restriction diet. Your urine should be clear or pale yellow.
- To keep the outlet valve from becoming infected, wash your hands before and after handling the drainage device.
- Empty your leg bag when one-half full. DO NOT allow the urine to sit in the bag for more than 3 to 4 hours.
- Daily cleansing around the catheter is necessary. A shower is preferred. If you must take a bath connect the catheter to the night drainage bag.
- If a crust forms on the catheter, it should be washed off gently with warm water and mild soap. Rinse the area and dry well after washing.
- Do not put creams or ointments on the catheter unless prescribed by your doctor.

Your physician will determine when and if your catheter needs to be changed. The area should also be thoroughly cleansed after all bowel movements to prevent infection.

## **Emptying Your Leg Bag**

1. Wash your hands with warm water and soap and dry well.
2. Unfasten the bottom leg strap.
3. To drain the bag, open the valve at the bottom of the leg bag and pull the valve down as far as it goes, into its open position.
4. Drain the contents of the bag into the toilet or other receptacle.
5. After the urine has been drained, close the valve to reseal the bag. When the valve is turned up as far as it goes, it is closed. Now re-fasten the bottom leg strap

## **Changing Leg Bag to the Night Bag**

It is important to change to the night bag at bedtime. The leg bag is too small to hold the amount of urine that will collect. The night bag is large, holds more urine, and will allow you to sleep all night without having to wake up to empty the bag.

1. Empty the leg bag. Disconnect the catheter from the leg bag at the clear connector. As you do this, pinch the catheter with your fingers so urine does not leak.
2. Take the plastic cap off the tubing from the night bag and connect the tubing to the catheter. Place the night bag inside a clean plastic bin beside the bed to protect against urine spilling on the floor.
3. Use a Foley catheter holder to secure the catheter to your thigh, and to prevent kinks or loops in the tubing.
4. Keep the urine collection bag below your bladder level, whether you are lying, sitting, or standing.
5. In the morning, empty the night bag. At the bottom of the bag, pull out the short end of tubing, then open the clamp and drain the urine.
6. If you wish, you can now put on the leg bag for use during the day.

## **Cleaning the Drainage Bags**

Your doctor may recommend cleaning the drainage bag periodically. Remove the drainage bag from the catheter (attach your catheter to a second drainage device during the cleaning).

Clean and deodorize the drainage bag by filling the bag with 2 parts vinegar and 3 parts water. (Or, you can use 1 part chlorine bleach to 10 parts water). Let this solution soak for about 15-20 minutes. Hang the bag with the outlet valve open to drain and dry the bag.

The external catheter equipment will last for approximately 1 month. Throw away the equipment earlier if it becomes discolored, odorous, or brittle.

## Dealing with Common Catheter Problems

**Leaking:** If you have urine leaking from around the area where the catheter enters the urethra, use diapers or some other absorbent materials to contain the leaking. If the catheter is not draining well, lie down flat and drink a lot of water. If you go to your local emergency room for any reason, do not let them remove or change the catheter without first speaking with your doctor.

**Bladder Spasms:** To minimize spasm, avoid constipation (use stool softeners) and reduce sudden movement that may pull on the catheter. Call us if your spasms become too painful and we will prescribe medication to help decrease the spasms.

**Blood Clots in your Urine:** Small blood clots are normal and will go away on their own. Large clots, however, can block your catheter and cause urine to leak or your bladder to spasm. If you see any blood in your urine, drink more fluids until your urine clears up. Call us immediately if your urine stops draining completely.

## When to Call the Doctor

**Call your doctor immediately if you have:**

- any sign of infection: **fever of 100.4°F (38°C)** or higher, chills, cough, sore throat, pain or burning upon urination, or redness or tenderness at an IV site or at any other wound or skin irritation
- bleeding in or around the catheter
- no urine draining from the catheter, even though you have been drinking plenty of fluids
- a lot of urine leaking around the catheter
- urine that has a very strong smell
- urine that is thick or cloudy
- swelling where the catheter enters your body (your urethra)