Flushing Your Nephrostomy Catheter

Not all patients need their catheter(s) flushed. It is often done when the catheter is newly placed until the drainage is clear. A doctor’s order is needed to flush a nephrostomy catheter. Once the drainage is clear, the catheter will not need to be flushed.

- **Note:** the renal pelvis can only hold about 5 to 10 ml (milliliters) of fluid. Only 5 ml of normal saline is used to flush the catheter to avoid distending and damaging the renal pelvis. If you feel any resistance or pressure as you put the fluid in, stop.

- **Never** use the syringe to pull the fluid back out of the catheter. Withdrawing the instilled fluid can damage the renal pelvis.

Gather these Supplies

- Prefilled saline syringe with 5 ml sterile 0.9% saline (NaCl) for injection
- Alcohol pad or cotton balls soaked with rubbing alcohol
- Non-sterile gloves

Learn more about your health care.

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Follow these Steps

1. Assemble equipment. Place them on a table that has been washed with soap and water and dried with a clean towel.

2. Wash your hands with soap and water. Rinse and towel dry.

3. Put on non-sterile gloves.

4. Check that the stopcock is “off” to the injection port.

5. Clean the injection cap on the stopcock with alcohol.

6. Put the saline syringe into the injection cap of the stopcock.

7. Turn the stopcock off to the drainage bag (closed). The stopcock flange faces the bag.

8. Gently push on the syringe plunger to put in the saline. Do not force the saline in or pull back on the plunger.
9. Turn the stopcock off to cap, allowing the flow of urine into the bag. Remove the syringe from the injection cap on the stopcock. Throw the syringe away in your trash.

10. Remove your gloves and wash your hands. Rinse and towel dry.

Talk to your doctor or others on your health care team if you have questions. You may request more written information from the Library for Health Information at (614) 293-3707 or email: health-info@osu.edu.