

Preventing Infections

During Urinary (Foley) Catheter Use

A urinary catheter is a long, thin, flexible tube put in through your urethra and into your bladder to drain urine. It may also be called a Foley or an indwelling catheter.

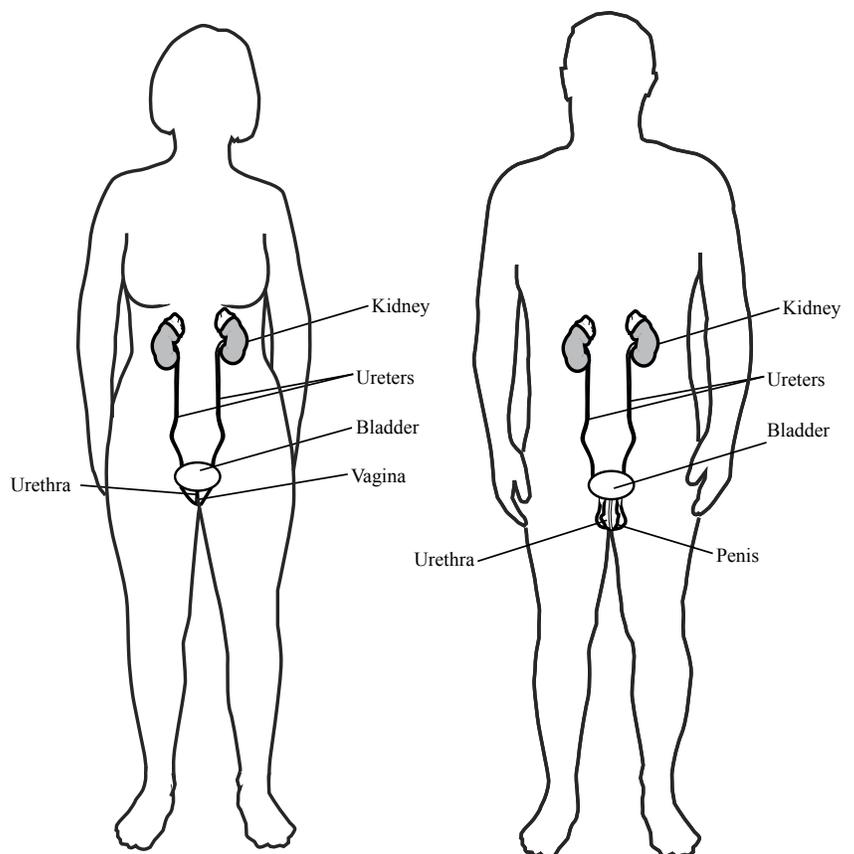
This tube has a small balloon at the end filled with water. The balloon keeps the catheter in place inside your bladder. The catheter is connected to tubing that drains urine into a collection bag outside your body.

Reasons for catheter use

A urinary catheter may be used:

- If your doctor wants you to decrease your activity after a surgery, injury or serious illness.
- If you are not able to pass urine on your own.
- If you are not able to get out of bed to urinate.
- To measure the amount of urine you pass.
- During certain tests of your kidneys and bladder.

A urinary catheter is only used when needed and is removed as soon as possible. Your doctor will talk to you about why you need to have a urinary catheter and how long it may need to stay in place.



Care to prevent infection

If you have a catheter in place, you have an increased risk of getting a urinary tract infection, also called a UTI. To decrease your risk of infection, special care will be taken before your catheter is put in and while your catheter is in place. When you are in the hospital, a member of your health care team will help care for and clean your catheter each day.



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To decrease your risk of infection:

- Wash your hands with soap and warm water before and after you touch your catheter. If this is not possible, you may also use alcohol-based hand sanitizer to clean your hands.
- Ask all caregivers to wash their hands before and after they touch your catheter. If this is not possible, they may also use alcohol-based hand sanitizer to clean their hands.
- Keep the area where the catheter leaves your body clean. Ask your doctor or nurse how often you or your caregiver should wash this area and what soap or products to use.
- **Do not pull or tug** on the catheter tubing. Use your leg strap to secure the tubing to your leg to prevent pulling on the catheter.
- Keep your catheter and tubing free of twists or kinks. **Do not** lay on your catheter. Make sure urine can flow through the tube and into your collection bag.
- Keep the collection bag lower than the level of your hips to prevent urine from flowing back into your bladder. **Do not** put the collection bag beside you in bed and keep the bag off the floor.
- Empty the collection bag at least every 8 hours or when it is over halfway full. **Do not** let the drain spout that is on the bag touch anything while you empty the urine.
- After you empty the urine from your bag, clean the tip of the tube with an alcohol wipe and re-clamp the tube. Return the tip of the tube to the pocket holder on the bag.

- Only disconnect your catheter from the drain tube when you change collection bags.
- **Do not take a bath.** Your doctor will tell you when it is okay to shower.
- Unless told otherwise, drink 8 to 10 cups of water or other caffeine-free fluids each day.

If you go home with a catheter, your nurse will teach you and your caregivers how to care for your catheter at home to prevent infection.

When to call your doctor

Call your doctor or nurse right away if you have signs of a urinary tract infection (UTI) that may include:

- Burning or pain in your lower abdomen or back
- Chills or a temperature of 100.5 degrees Fahrenheit (38 degrees Celsius) or higher
- Urine that looks bloody, dark golden or cloudy
- Pain or aching in your back, around the area of your kidneys
- Pain, redness, swelling or drainage where the catheter leaves your body
- Nausea or vomiting
- If you become confused or have changes in how you are acting. This is most common when you are older.

If you have a UTI, your doctor may order medicine (antibiotics) to treat the infection. Your doctor may remove your catheter. If you still need a catheter, your doctor or nurse may place a new catheter.

Talk to your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care.

For more health information, go to patienteducation.osumc.edu or contact the Library for Health Information at 614-293-3707 or health-info@osu.edu.