Female Self Catheterization

Catheterization, also called self cath, is a way to empty all of the urine from your bladder. This keeps urine from sitting in your bladder. If urine sits in your bladder too long, it can cause a bladder or kidney infection.

Daily routine

• Drink 8 ounces (oz) of fluid every 1 to 2 hours during the day and limit fluids for 2 hours before bedtime.
• Catheterize yourself _____ times a day at _____________________.
• Measure your urine a few times per week. There should be no more than _____ oz (_____ ml) in your bladder at one time. If you have more than _____ oz (_____ ml), either catheterize yourself more often, or limit your fluids.

Supplies

• Catheter - clear or red rubber tube.
• Water-soluble lubricant, such as K-Y Jelly or Surgilube. Do not use Vaseline.
• Catheter extension tube if needed.
• Urine container if needed. Use any jug, bottle, or urinal, which can attach to the side of a bed, chair, or wheelchair, or can be held between your knees.

Steps to follow

1. You may catheterize yourself while sitting on the toilet, in a wheelchair, in bed, or while standing.

2. Wash your hands well with soap and water or use an alcohol based hand sanitizer.

3. Take the catheter out of the plastic bag. Put a small amount of lubricant on the tip and about 2 inches up the catheter. Place it on a clean towel within easy reach.

4. Separate the skin folds of the labia with your 2nd and 4th fingers. Wash the urinary opening (urethra) with soap and water.
5. Keep your fingers holding the labia folds open. Find the urinary opening just above your vagina with your middle finger from the same hand. A mirror may be helpful to be able to see the area.

6. Use your other hand to pick up the catheter.

7. Put the catheter tip into the urinary opening next to your finger.

8. Push the catheter in about 2 to 3 inches until urine flows freely.

9. Let the urine flow into the container or the toilet. An extension tube attached to the end of your catheter will give you the extra tubing needed to reach the toilet from your wheelchair.

10. When urine stops flowing, take some deep breaths or press on your lower abdomen.

11. Slowly pull the catheter out. Stop pulling the catheter out any time urine starts to flow. Repeat this step until the urine completely stops.

12. Pinch the end of the catheter to keep urine from spilling on your clothes. Slowly take the catheter out.

13. Wash your hands.

14. Measure your urine 1 or 2 times a week to make sure the amounts are not greater than _________.

**Catheter care**

1. Lather up your hands and wash the catheter by rubbing it between your soapy hands.
2. Rinse the tube well with water inside and out.
3. Dry with a clean towel or tissue.
4. Lay the catheter on a clean towel to air dry.
5. Store the catheter in a clean plastic bag or other clean container, such as a cosmetic bag or paper towel.
6. Catheters may be reused until they become brittle, show wear, crack, or do not drain well.
Tips for caregivers

• If you are a caregiver who catheterizes someone else, you would follow the same process described.
• Have the doctor or nurse walk you through the steps and ask questions about anything you do not understand.
• Wash your hands before and after and keep all of the supplies clean to prevent infection.
• Watch for signs of infection, listed below.
• Ask the person if he or she has pain or discomfort during the process.

When to call your doctor

Call your doctor if you have any problems or these signs of infection:

• Cloudy or foul smelling urine
• Chills or fever
• Leaking urine in between catheterization (if this is not normal for you)
• Not feeling well or feel tired or weak
• Pain or tenderness across the lower back
• Increased muscle or bladder spasms (pain)
• Red or swollen urinary opening
• Not able to pass the catheter through to the bladder