Home Care for Your Nephrostomy Catheter

This handout covers information about caring for your nephrostomy catheter right after placement and caring for it long term. If you have any questions, please call Interventional Radiology at (614) 293-2773.

Your recovery after the catheter is placed

You were given medicine through your IV for sedation during the placement of your catheter, along with some local anesthetic to numb the entry site. This may cause you to feel sleepy, dizzy or tired for hours after the catheter is placed.

Here are some guidelines to follow for the first 24 to 48 hours after your catheter is put in:

- Go home and rest for the remainder of the day.
- Do not drive or work around any mechanical equipment, power tools or appliance or sharp objects until the next day after your catheter was put in place.
- Avoid making any major life or legal decisions for at least 24 hours after the sedation because you may not be able to think clearly or remember your actions.
- Eat light foods, like jell-o, pudding, soups, juices and other liquids for the rest of first day. Start back on your usual diet as tolerated after the procedure.
- Take your usual medicines when you get back home.
If you take metformin (*Glucophage, Glucophage XR*) or glyburide/metformin (*Glucovance*) for diabetes, do not take that medicine for 48 hours after the catheter placement. This is because it could react badly with the dye used to during the catheter placement. The dye clears from your body in a day or two. Drinking water helps to rid the dye from your body. **Restart this medicine on the third day after the procedure.**

- Your IV site may be tender for a day or two. You may use warm moist compresses on it for 20 minutes every day. If the site gets more red, swollen or tender after 2 or 3 days, call your doctor.

- Some bruising or tenderness at the site of the catheter is common. It may be very mild bruising to black and blue, and it may be very small to about the size of a golf ball. These signs may last for 2 weeks or longer. Apply warm moist compresses to the site for 20 minutes 2 or 3 times a day to help with comfort. Be sure to cover your dressing with plastic wrap first to keep it dry.

- **Check your temperature each day** that you have the catheter in place.

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Call (614) 293-2773 or go to the nearest Emergency Room if, in the first 4 to 8 hours after your catheter is put in, you have:

- Active bleeding at the catheter site that does not stop after you put finger pressure on it
- Increasing pain or swelling at or around the catheter site
- Fever of 101 degrees Fahrenheit or greater with or without chills
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**Skin care and showering**

- Keep the drain site dry.

- You may take a shower 48 hours after the catheter is placed, but you need to keep the site dry.

- Before you shower, cover the catheter dressing and the skin around the site with plastic wrap taped to your skin. You must cover the site for 14 days after placement.

- After 14 days, if the site has healed, you can shower without the dressing and plastic wrap. After the end of your shower, use a clean washcloth and liquid antibacterial soap like Dial with water to clean the
site. Then rinse the site well with plain water. Pat the drain site gently with a towel to dry.

- Bathing in a tub, using a hot tub or swimming is not recommended as long as you have the catheter in place.

**Dressing change**

A gauze dressing should be changed every other day, but a transparent dressing is changed every 72 hours. Either dressing should be changed if it gets wet or the edges become loose.

**Steps**

1. Gather your supplies.
   - 2 pairs of non-sterile gloves
   - Cotton swabs or clean washcloths
   - Antibacterial soap
   - 4x4 gauze split dressings (package of two)
   - Paper tape if gauze dressing is used
   - Small plastic garbage bag
2. Wash your hands with soap and water for 15 seconds. Rinse and towel dry.
4. Carefully remove the old dressing to avoid dislodging the catheter. Note soreness, redness, drainage or odor at the site where the catheter goes through the skin. These signs may indicate infection. If any of these signs are noted, clean the skin site and change the dressing more often for one week. If the signs do not improve right away, call your doctor.
5. Remove the non-sterile gloves and wash your hands again. Then put on the other clean pair of gloves.
6. Clean the skin around the catheter (exit site) with a cotton swab or clean washcloth wet with liquid antibacterial soap and water. Use a circular motion moving outward from the center to about 3 inches. Repeat this step with the second swab or washcloth, and more if needed to remove any crusting. Let the
area air dry. Do not fan it to speed the drying because that will put more germs near the site.

If the antibacterial soap irritates your skin, use sterile saline to clean the site.

7. Apply one sterile 4x4 gauze pad around the tube. Be careful not to touch the pad where it will be placed over the catheter.

8. Use a second gauze dressing, placed over the first one to cover the tube.

9. Tape over the gauze pad with the paper tape as shown. Be sure to pinch the tape around the tube.
10. Throw the old dressing, gloves, used swabs and wrappings in the plastic bag. Remove the gloves and put them in the bag. Tie the bag shut and put it in a trash can.

11. Wash your hands with soap and warm water. Rinse and towel dry.

**Care of Your Drainage Bag**

- Empty your drainage bag as often as needed when it is about 2/3 full. Turn the blue knob at the bottom of the bag and drain it into a measuring container. Keep track of the amount of drainage each day.

- You should not clean the drainage bag. You will be sent home with an extra drainage bag to use if there is a leak in the bag or the bag or tubing gets damaged.

**Special Precautions and Complications**

- Keep the drainage bag below the level of your kidneys at all times, to prevent a back flow of urine into the kidneys. **Note:** your drainage bag may be different from the one in the picture.

- To prevent sludge and calculi or stones from forming, drink 6 to 8 glasses (8-ounce glass) of fluids a day.

- Keep your nephrostomy catheter drainage bag closed to reduce risk of infection.

- Keep the nephrostomy catheter and drainage bag tubing free of twists, kinks or leaks.
When to Call Your Doctor

There are other times when you should call your doctors about your catheter. Call right away at Interventional Radiology at (614) 293-2773 for these problems:

- Sudden decrease in the amount of drainage with discomfort at the catheter site
- Blood in or around your catheter
- Fever greater than 101 degrees F
- Persistent blood in the urine
- Nausea and vomiting
- Chills
- Urine that is cloudy or has a strong odor
- Back pain
- Catheter becomes dislodged or broken
- Catheter begins to leak

If you need to contact Interventional Radiology in the evening or on a weekend, please call 614-293-8000. Ask the operator to page the Interventional Radiology resident on call.

Keep your appointments to have your nephrostomy catheter changed. In most cases, the catheter will be changed every 2 to 3 months.

To schedule a catheter change or if you have other questions about your nephrostomy catheter care, please call Interventional Radiology at (614) 293-2773.

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.