



PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

# Caring for Your Urinary (Foley®) Catheter

This information will help you care for your urinary (Foley) catheter while you're at home.

You have had a Foley catheter (a thin, flexible tube) placed in your bladder to drain your urine. It's held inside your bladder by a balloon filled with water. The parts of the catheter outside your body are shown in Figure 1.

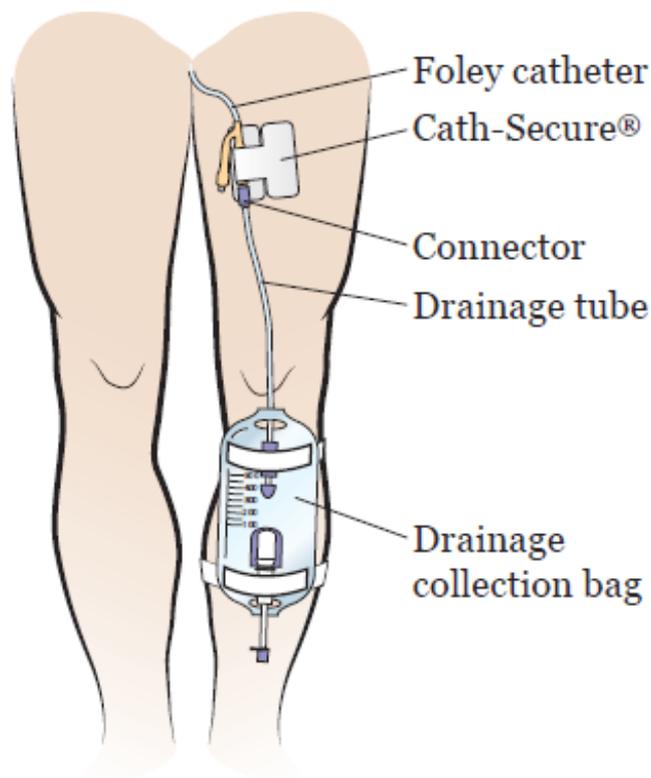


Figure 1. The parts of your Foley catheter

## Catheter Care

You need to perform catheter care every day. This involves cleaning the catheter, changing the drain collection bags, and washing the drainage bags.

You may also find it helpful to watch the video below that shows you how to

change the drainage bags.



Please visit [www.mskcc.org/cancer-care/patient-education/how-change-your-foley-catheter-drainage-bag](http://www.mskcc.org/cancer-care/patient-education/how-change-your-foley-catheter-drainage-bag) to watch this video.

## Showering

You can shower while you have your Foley catheter. However, do not take a bath until after your catheter is removed. This is because taking a bath while you have the Foley catheter puts you at risk for infections.

Make sure you always shower with your night bag. Do not shower with your leg bag. You may find it more convenient to shower in the morning.

## Cleaning Your Catheter

You can clean your catheter while you are in the shower.

You will need the following supplies:

- Mild soap, such as Dove®
  - Water
  - 1 Cath-Secure®
1. Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water.
  2. Using mild soap and water, clean your genital area.
    - Men should retract the foreskin, if needed, and clean the area, including the penis.
    - Women should separate the labia, and clean the area from front to back.
  3. Clean your urethra (urinary opening), which is where the catheter enters your body.
  4. Clean the catheter from where it enters your body and then down, away from your body. Hold the catheter at the point it enters your body so that you don't put tension on it.

5. Rinse the area well and dry it gently.
6. If you removed your old Cath-Secure, use the new Cath-Secure to attach the catheter to your leg to keep it from moving.

## Changing the Drainage Bag

You will change your drainage bag twice a day.

- In the morning after you shower, change the night bag to the leg bag.
- At night before you go to bed, change the leg bag to the night bag.

You will need the following supplies:

- A clean washcloth (not one already used for bathing) or a 4”x 4” piece of gauze
  - Night or leg drainage bag (whichever one you are switching to)
  - 2 alcohol pads
1. Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and warm water.
  2. Empty the urine from the drainage bag into the toilet. Make sure that spout of the drainage bag never touches the side of the toilet or any emptying container.
  3. Place the clean cloth or gauze under the connector to catch any leakage.
  4. Pinch off the catheter with your fingers and disconnect the used bag.
  5. Wipe the end of the catheter with an alcohol pad.
  6. Wipe the connector on the new bag with the second alcohol pad.
  7. Connect the clean bag to the catheter and release your finger pinch.
  8. Check all connections. Straighten any kinks or twists in the tubing.

# Caring for the Drainage Bags

## Caring for the leg bag

- The tubing from the leg bag should fit down to your calf with your leg slightly bent. If you have extra tubing, you may need to cut it. Your nurse will show you how to do this.
- Always wear the leg bag below your knee. This will help it drain.
- Make sure to place the leg bag on your calf with the Velcro® straps your nurse gave you. Use a leg strap to secure the tubing to your thigh.
- If the straps leave a mark on your leg, they are too tight and should be loosened. Leaving the straps too tight can decrease your circulation and lead to blood clots.
- Empty the leg bag into the toilet through the spout at the bottom every 2 to 4 hours, as needed. Don't let the bag become completely full.
- Don't lie down for longer than 2 hours while you are wearing the leg bag.

## Caring for the night bag

- Always keep the night bag below the level of your bladder.
- To hang your night bag while you sleep, place a clean plastic bag inside of a wastebasket. Hang the night bag on the inside of the wastebasket.

## Cleaning the drainage bags

You will need the following supplies:

- White vinegar
  - Cool water
1. Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and warm water.
  2. Rinse the bag with cool water. Do not use hot water because it can damage the plastic equipment.
  3. To decrease odor, fill the bag halfway with a mixture of 1 part white vinegar and 3 parts water. Shake the bag and let it sit for 15 minutes.

4. Rinse the bag with cool water and hang it up to dry.

## Preventing Infection

- Keep the drainage bag below the level of your bladder and off the floor at all times.
- Keep the catheter secured to your thigh to prevent it from moving.
- Don't lie on your catheter or block the flow of urine in the tubing.
- Shower daily to keep the catheter clean.
- Clean your hands before and after touching the catheter or bag.

## Special Points

- You may see some blood or urine around where the catheter enters your body, especially when walking or having a bowel movement. This is normal, as long as there's urine draining into the drainage bag. If there's not, call your doctor or nurse.
- While you have your catheter, drink 1 to 2 glasses of liquids every 2 hours while you're awake.

## Call Your Doctor or Nurse Immediately if:

- Your catheter comes out. Do not try to replace it yourself.
- You have a temperature of 101 °F (38.3 °C) or higher.
- You are making less urine than usual.
- You have foul-smelling urine.
- You have bright red blood or large blood clots in your urine.
- You have abdominal (belly) pain and no urine in your catheter bag.

If you have any questions, contact a member of your healthcare team directly. If you're a patient at MSK and you need to reach a provider after 5:00 PM, during the weekend, or on a holiday, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit [www.mskcc.org/pe](http://www.mskcc.org/pe) to search our virtual library.

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