



Teaching guide

Self-catheterization for females

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Your doctor has recommended using a catheter to help you empty your bladder completely.

This procedure involves inserting a small tube (urinary catheter) into your bladder to let the urine drain out, and then removing the tube. This guide will show you how to do this yourself, as needed.

Using a catheter to empty the bladder allows you to:

- **Reduce the risk of urinary tract infections** by preventing urine from remaining too long in the bladder.
- **Keep your bladder healthy** by keeping the muscle relaxed and working properly.
- **Protect your kidneys** by preventing the bladder from overfilling and forcing urine back into the kidneys.

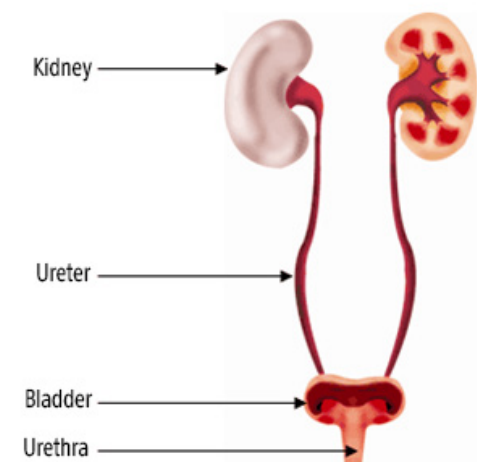


In the hospital, medical personnel insert the catheter using a **sterile technique**. This helps **prevent harmful bacteria from getting into your body**, because the hospital environment contains germs that your body isn't accustomed to.

But at home, your body is already used to the bacteria in your environment. That's why you can use **a clean technique, which is easier**: without sterile gloves, but still following proper hygiene practices.

Keep this sheet handy so you remember what to do.





Understanding your urinary system

Here is some information about your urinary system to help you understand why a catheter is used.

How does the urinary system work?

- The kidneys produce urine.
- The urine then travels through two small tubes called the ureters.
- The bladder acts as a holding tank for urine. It fills up every three to four hours.
- Your bladder empties when you urinate through another small tube called the urethra, which ends at the urethral meatus (the opening where the urine

Instructions

1. Gather all the supplies you will need and set them up within reach.
2. Urinate (if possible) and make a note of the amount of urine (if requested).
3. Wash your hands with soap and water OR with a disinfectant gel (hand sanitizer).
4. If you are sitting, place the mattress pad or a clean, dry towel between your thighs. Then place the graduated urine collection container on the mattress pad or the clean, dry towel.
5. Get into a comfortable position

Supplies needed

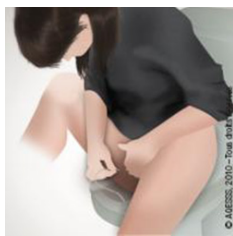
- Disinfectant gel (hand sanitizer) or liquid hand soap
- Two (2) washcloths and mild soap OR unscented wipes
- 1 sterile urinary catheter
- Water-based lubricant, unless the catheter is already lubricated or coated with a slippery layer that activates on contact with water (hydrophilic polymer) **(Do not use petroleum jelly [Vaseline] or mineral oil)**
- Mattress pad or clean, dry towel
- Graduated measuring container to collect urine.

Optional

- Water for a catheter that becomes slippery on contact with water (hydrophilic polymer)
- Mirror



Sitting in bed or in an armchair, with your legs spread.



Sitting on the toilet with one foot on a small bench or the edge of the bathtub for a better view of the opening where the urine comes out.



Standing with one foot on the toilet (if you can locate the opening where the urine comes out by touch).



6. Clean your genitals with mild soap OR an unscented wipe.
7. **Wash your hands** with soap and water or with a disinfectant gel (hand sanitizer).
8. Open the catheter package.
9. Apply a small amount of lubricant to the tip of the catheter (the end that will be inserted into the urinary opening), over approximately **5–7 cm** (approximately 2–2.5 in.).
10. Hold the catheter **with your dominant hand**, like a pencil. Position your fingers about **10 cm** (4 in.) from the tip that will be inserted into the urinary opening.
11. Place the other end of the catheter (where the urine will come out) into the **urine collection container**.
12. With your non-dominant hand, use **your index and ring fingers to gently spread the labia majora** until you can see your urinary opening. If needed, use a mirror to help you locate it.
13. Slowly insert the catheter into the urinary opening, approximately 5–7 cm (2–2.5 in.) until urine begins to flow

Note: If you accidentally insert the catheter into your vagina, leave it in place. This will help you to locate the urinary opening more easily. Then start over from step 6 with a new catheter.

14. Let the urine drain completely.
15. Slowly remove the catheter. If more urine starts to flow, wait a little while before continuing to remove the catheter. While removing it, place one finger (your index finger) on the end of the catheter where the urine comes out **to avoid splashing your clothes**. Write down the amount of urine (if requested), empty the container into the toilet, and wash the container.
16. Wash your hands with soap and water or with a disinfectant gel (hand sanitizer).
17. Clean and store the catheter as described in the “Catheter care” section.

It is recommended you insert the catheter:



- At regular intervals during the day
- Based on how much you drink
- According to your doctor’s recommendations

How often to insert the catheter

Most people use a catheter every **4–6 hours** to prevent the bladder from overfilling. How often you self-catheterize will depend on how much urine is still in your bladder after you urinate (this is called residual urine).

Listen to your body. If you feel like your bladder is full or if you feel uncomfortable, use the catheter sooner than planned. The goal is to have less than 400–500 ml of urine in the bladder at all times.

How often to insert the catheter (continued)

If your doctor did not recommend a specific frequency, you can use this chart as a guide.

Volume of urine	How often to insert the catheter
More than 500 ml	Every 4 hours, e.g.: 10 a.m., 2 p.m., 6 p.m., 10 p.m., 2 a.m., 6 a.m.
Less than 500 ml	You can skip the 2 a.m. self-catheterization, e.g.: 10 a.m., 2 p.m., 6 p.m., 10 p.m., 6 a.m.
Less than 300 ml	Decrease to 4 self-catheterizations in 24 hours, e.g.: 6 a.m., 12 p.m., 6 p.m., 10 p.m.



How much liquid should you drink in a day?

- When you have a catheter in place, it is recommended you drink **6–7 glasses of water per day (1,500–1,800 ml)**.
- **Avoid caffeinated beverages** (e.g., coffee, tea, energy drinks), which can irritate the bladder.
- **Limit how much you drink after 7 p.m.** to avoid your bladder overfilling at night.

Catheter care

Ideally, you should use a new catheter each time. But if you want to reuse a catheter, here are the supplies you will need and how to clean it properly.

How to clean the catheter:

- **Wash the catheter** immediately after use with **warm water and mild soap**.
- Rinse the inside and outside thoroughly with clean water.
- Dry the outside with a clean towel; dry the inside using a syringe filled with air.
- Store the completely dry catheter in a clean, resealable container.
- If you cannot wash the catheter right away, **place it in a labelled container (“dirty”) and clean it as soon as possible**.
- Store the **syringe in a clean container** until the next use.

If the catheter becomes rough, cracked, discoloured (dark) or damaged, throw it away and use a new one. Always keep two or three spare catheters on hand. You can buy them at the pharmacy or at a medical supply store.



Supplies

- Clean towel
- Resealable bag or clean container to store the catheter
- Mild soap (e.g., liquid hand soap or dish soap)
- One (1) 10-ml syringe
- Small, clean container to hold the syringe after use



Important points to remember

At home and at the hospital:

- At home, use the clean technique (with proper hygiene).
- In the hospital, medical personnel will use the sterile technique due to the higher risk of contamination.

Preventing urinary tract infections:

- If you notice **whitish deposits in your urine**, it may be a sign that you are not emptying your bladder often enough.
- Drink more water and **insert the catheter more often**, depending on how much you drink.
- The most common signs of a urinary tract infection are:
 - Nausea and vomiting
 - Pressure or cramps in the groin or lower abdomen
 - Blood in the urine
 - More frequent, urgent need to urinate or painful urination
 - Fever, chills and/or back pain

Consult a doctor if you experience one of more of these signs.

If you have difficulty inserting the catheter:

- Never **force the catheter**
- **Take a break**, take a deep breath, relax, then slowly start again
- Add a bit more **lubricant** and insert the catheter **slowly**
- You can also try **rotating the catheter slightly**
- If you are still having trouble, **see a doctor**

In case of bleeding:

- If you notice a small amount of **blood on the catheter or in your urine**, your **urethra** may have been slightly irritated or injured.
- If the bleeding is **minor**, drink water and continue inserting the catheter as scheduled.
- If the bleeding is **heavy or won't stop**, **see a doctor**.



Contacts

If you encounter problems or need information, please contact:

CLSC:

Tel. no:

Info-Santé: 8-1-1

References:

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