

Patient Advice Leaflet:

Urinary Retention



You are being discharged from hospital with a catheter after your bladder stopped emptying. This leaflet aims to give you some more information about looking after your catheter and the follow-up process at hospital for removal of the catheter.

What is Urinary Retention?

Urinary retention is the term used to describe when the bladder stops emptying urine and it builds up within the bladder causing pain and distress. This is relieved by the insertion of a catheter into the bladder. A catheter is a thin, flexible plastic tube which is inserted through the urethra (water pipe) and allows urine to drain from the bladder. For most men, the commonest causes of urinary retention are; enlargement of the prostate gland, constipation or urinary tract infections.

How is Urinary Retention Managed?

You will return for the catheter to be removed in the next few weeks. We may also give you some medicine to take for a few days to increase the likelihood of successful removal.

How to look after a catheter

Looking after a catheter can seem daunting when it is first inserted but is often straightforward to cope with at home. Some general tips are helpful;

1. Good Hygiene – maintaining good hygiene is required to prevent infections. You should remember to wash your hand before and after handling the catheter or drainage bag, wash the catheter and area around it every day with soap and water.
2. Empty the drainage bag before baths or showers.
3. Maintain a good fluid intake – aim to drink 2 litres of fluid a day to help prevent infection and avoid constipation unless instructed otherwise.
4. A healthy balanced diet of fresh fruit and vegetables and fibre is helpful to maintain a good bowel pattern, this is especially important if you are prone to constipation.

Having a catheter in place should not affect your daily activities and does not interfere with driving. Many people will be discharged with 'leg bags' which are drainage bags connected to the thigh, knee or calf and secured to your leg with straps. At the bottom of the bag is a drainage valve that allows you to empty the bag. Always wash your hand before and after opening the valve, although there is no reason to wear gloves.

What problems may your experience?

Some people can experience some cramping or 'bladder spasms' with the catheter or a desire to pass urine. These are very common and tend to subside over time. Others may see some blood in the catheter. Also, having a catheter in place can increase your risk of developing a urinary tract infection. If there is blood in the catheter tubing have a good fluid intake to help flush the urine through the catheter and be aware of any specific changes to the colour or smell of the urine. The catheter can occasionally block or leak from around the catheter. If this occurs the catheter may have become kinked, the bladder irritated or there may be some debris in the tubing. If there are issues with the catheter working then try the following simple tips;

1. Check your catheter and release any kinks.
2. Check the catheter bag is not too full.
3. Follow the above advice regarding fluid and dietary intake.
4. Movement may dislodge a blockage so walking around may help.
5. Make sure your leg bag is positioned below the level of the waist to allow drainage.

If no urine is draining and you feel uncomfortable you should contact

Mon-Fri 9-5 Julie McCreanor / Margary Nicoll, specialist nurses at RAH, 0141 314 6937

After 5pm, Ward 28, 0141 314 7028

Catheter Removal

When you attend for catheter removal or 'trial of voiding' you will attend in the morning and the catheter balloon will be deflated. This is not painful and is very quick. Once your catheter is removed you will be given fluid to drink and you will be asked to pass urine into bottles. If you are passing urine satisfactorily you will be discharged home without a catheter. If at this point you still cannot pass urine a new catheter will be inserted.

You will be contacted to attend a surgical ward on a Saturday or Sunday morning.

Please bring an overnight bag and any medications you are on as you may stay overnight.

You will be advised to contact the ward you are due to attend at 09:00 first before you attend to ensure a bed is available to prevent having to wait in the corridor.