



Urethral Catheter Care

Your child has a urethral catheter, which drains the bladder.

What is a urethral catheter?

A urethral catheter is a tube that carries your child's urine from the bladder to a bag for disposal. This tube, called a Foley catheter, comes out through your child's urethra. It has a small balloon on the end inside your child's bladder to keep it from falling out.

Urine flows from your child's bladder through this tube into a drainage bag. A urethral catheter may be needed for a variety of reasons, such as:

- Not being able to urinate (urinary retention)
- Surgery
- Other health problems

How do I care for the catheter?

- Always wash your hands with soap and water before and after touching the catheter.
- Keep the catheter taped securely to keep it from pulling out. The catheter can be taped to the upper thigh.
- Wash the catheter where it leaves the body every day with mild soap and warm water. This may also be done in the shower. Take care that you do not pull on the catheter.
- It is OK for your child to take a shower or bathe while the tube is in.
- Avoid kinking the catheter. This will block the flow of urine.
- Wash the urine container every day with soap and hot water.
- Encourage your child to drink plenty of fluids.

How do I care for the drainage bag?

- You may be given 2 different types of drainage bags, one for day and one for night.
- During the day, a leg bag will allow your child to wear regular clothes and be free to play or work. It needs to be emptied often (whenever $\frac{2}{3}$ full) because it is small. Use a larger drainage bag overnight.
- Empty the bag regularly into a urine container or into the toilet when it is about $\frac{2}{3}$ full, or at least every 8 hours for an overnight bag. This will prevent urine from flowing back into the bladder.
- It is important to keep the bag below the level of your child's bladder and off the floor at all times. This will also prevent urine from flowing back into the bladder.

How do I change the drainage bag?

If you will be changing drainage bags at home, a nurse will show you how to follow these steps:

1. Wash your hands with soap and water
2. Disconnect the tubing from the catheter
3. Insert the new drainage bag tubing into the catheter
4. If you are going to reuse the bag, cover the connection site with a sterile cap or gauze until you clean it.

How do I clean the drainage bag?

1. Make a bleach solution (4 parts water to 1 part bleach)
2. Soak the bag for at least 2 hours
3. Rinse the bag with water
4. Dry and store on a clean towel
5. Replace the bag if there is a hole or if it is more than 30 days old

What if my doctor asks me to drain the catheter into a diaper?

If your child is not potty trained, your doctor might instruct you to drain the catheter into a “double diaper.” The double diaper technique keeps the catheter clean and allows it to continuously drain. Your child’s nurse will show you how to do this. To double diaper:

- Your child will wear a normal sized diaper on the inside.
- On the outside, your child will wear a diaper 1 size larger.
- The catheter will drain into the outer diaper so the catheter does not get soiled if your child has a bowel movement.

How do I irrigate the catheter?

Irrigating a catheter means to flush saline or sterile water into the bladder through the catheter with a syringe. This rinses the catheter and bladder and allows the catheter to drain more easily.

- Your child’s nurse will show you how to irrigate the catheter, and soon you will be able to do this on your own.
- Always wash your hands with soap and water before and after touching the catheter.
- Disconnect the catheter from the drainage bag.
- Put a sterile top or gauze over the open end of the drainage bag until ready to reconnect to the Foley catheter.
- Slowly push 15mL of saline or sterile water with a clean piston syringe. Pull back slowly until you see urine.

To Learn More

- Urology Scheduling
206-987-2509
- Paging Operator
206-987-2131
- Ask your child's nurse or doctor
- www.seattlechildrens.org

Free Interpreter Services

- In the hospital, ask your child's nurse.
- From outside the hospital, call the toll-free Family Interpreting Line 1-866-583-1527. Tell the interpreter the name or extension you need.

- For directions to make saline or sterile water at home, read our handout "Making Sterile Distilled Water and Sterile Saline Solutions at Home" www.seattlechildrens.org/pdf/PE610.pdf.
- You may be asked to repeat this 2 or 3 times in a row and/or several times per day.

What happens after the catheter is removed?

Once the catheter is removed, your child may have a burning feeling when peeing for the first time. If your child has a problem peeing, have your child sit and pee in a tub of warm water. Many small children will pee when they fall asleep.

When should I call the doctor?

Please call your child's doctor if:

- The catheter comes out
- The catheter stops draining urine
- Your child has pain in their stomach area or back
- Your child has nausea or is vomiting
- Your child hasn't peed for 6 to 8 hours after the catheter was removed
- Your child shows signs of a urinary tract infection, such as:
 - Fever of 101.5 degrees or chills
 - Irritability
 - Smelly, cloudy or bloody urine
 - Wetting accidents if otherwise potty trained

If you have questions or concerns, please call the nurse in the Urology Clinic at 206-987-2509. After 5 p.m. or on weekends call the paging operator at 206-987-2131 and ask for the urologist on-call.