Nephrostomy Tube
Care at home

What is a nephrostomy tube?
It is a drainage tube that connects to the kidney to drain pee (urine).

Why does my child need a nephrostomy tube?
The kidneys make urine that drains down a tube called the ureter into the bladder. When a ureter becomes blocked, the urine cannot reach the bladder and backs up in the kidney. A nephrostomy tube is placed to drain this urine. This tube will only be in place until the ureter can drain urine again. It may remain in place for a few days, weeks or months. This depends on the cause of the blockage and how quickly your child heals.

How does the nephrostomy tube get put in?
We will put it in during a simple surgery done by a surgeon or radiologist. Your child will be asleep for the surgery.

The tube will be held in place with a stitch. Once it is in place, it will connect to a drainage bag that is outside of your child’s body. A bandage (dressing) will cover where the tube comes out to protect it and to absorb any urine leaking around the tube. The flow of urine will be controlled by a valve.
Nephrostomy Tube

called a “stopcock” that can be switched on and off. Your child will still pee (urinate) as usual, even though some urine will go out through the tube.

How do I care for the nephrostomy tube?

It is important to keep the nephrostomy tube clean to prevent bacteria and other germs from getting in the body. Germs can cause a kidney infection. It is also important to keep urine from flowing from the tube back into the kidney.

• Always wash your hands with soap and water before and after touching the tube.
• Tape the tube to the skin with 2 to 3 pieces of tape to keep it from being pulled out.
• Wash the area where the tube comes out of the body with mild soap and water daily. It is important to keep this area clean.
• It is OK for your child to take a shower while the tube is in. Before they do, make sure that it is taped to their body so it does not get pulled out.
• It is important to keep the bag at a level that is lower than the kidney (but off of the floor) at all times. This includes when your child is standing, sitting or lying down flat. This will keep urine from flowing back into your child’s kidney.
• Avoid kinking the catheter. This will block the flow of urine.

How often should I empty the bag?

• Empty the bag often, when it is about half full. This will keep urine from flowing back into the kidney.
• During the day empty the bag at least every 4 hours, and more often if the bag gets half full before that.
• It is OK to wait overnight to empty the bag when your child sleeps.
• Encourage your child to drink plenty of fluids.

How do I change and clean the drainage bag?

If you will not be unhooking the bag from the tube, it is OK to use the same bag without washing it for 2 weeks. After that time, you should change bags or wash and reuse the old bag. If you are taking the bag off of the tube, it is important to wash it before connecting it back into the tube.

• Empty the bag and then turn the stopcock to the “off” position.
• Clean the connection area of the nephrostomy tube and drainage bag with an alcohol swab before taking the tube and the bag apart or putting them back together.
• Clean drainage bags with warm soapy water.
• Dry and store on a dry, clean towel.
• You can use the same bag for up to a month if you wash it every 2 weeks. Replace the bag if it gets stiff and hard to clean or if there is a hole in it.
• Throw old or damaged bags away.

**How do I change the dressing?**

You only need to keep the dressing on for the first few days after surgery. If you want to keep using a dressing to keep the area dry, that is OK. It is important to check your child’s skin daily.

1. Wash your hands with soap and water.
2. Hold the tube with one hand and remove the old dressing with the other.
3. **Check the skin around the tube for redness, swelling, a bad smell or drainage.** If you see any of these signs, call the Urology clinic right away at 206-987-2509.
4. Clean the skin around the tube with soap and water. Wipe in a direction away from the part where the tube comes out. After cleaning, dry well.
5. Place the gauze around the tube and use tape to keep it in place.
6. Tape the tube to the skin with 2 to 3 pieces of tape to keep it from being pulled out.
7. Change the dressing daily, or if it gets wet. If there is no drainage, it is OK not to put on a dressing.
8. Another larger dressing over the entire area may help keep your child from pulling on the tube.
9. After changing the dressing, always check that the nephrostomy tube is draining well.

**Do I need to flush the nephrostomy tube?**

You do not need to do this unless we ask you to. We will teach you how to do this before you take your child home.
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To Learn More

- Urology Clinic
  206-987-2509
- On weekends, call the hospital operator at
  206-987-2000 and ask for the urologist on call
- Ask your child’s healthcare provider
- 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.

Do I need to clamp the nephrostomy tube?

Only clamp (turn the stopcock to the “off” position) the tube briefly for changing the bag, unless your child’s healthcare team gives you other instructions. If you are instructed to clamp the tube for other reasons:

1. Wash your hands with soap and water.
2. Empty the bag, turn the stopcock to off.
3. Clean the connection between the bag and tube with an alcohol swab.
4. Remove the bag and clean with warm soapy water.
5. Cover the end of the tube with a cap.
6. Unclamp the tube (turn stopcock to drain) and attach to drainage bag if your child develops any of the following symptoms:
   - Stomach or back pain
   - Nausea or throwing up (vomiting)
   - Fever

If any of these symptoms continue or get worse after unclamping the tube, call your child’s healthcare provider right away or bring your child to the Emergency Department. Your child could have an infection that needs treatment. See the section below called “When should I call my child’s doctor?”

When should I call my child’s doctor?

Call your child’s healthcare team if:

- The nephrostomy tube or stitches come out
- The nephrostomy tube stops draining urine
- Your child has a fever of 101.5 degrees or higher
- Your child’s urine is cloudy or bloody
- The skin where the tube comes out is red, swollen or has smelly drainage
- Your child has pain in their stomach area or back
- Your child has nausea or is vomiting
- If you have any questions or concerns

Seattle Children’s offers interpreter services for Deaf, hard of hearing or non-English speaking patients, family members and legal representatives free of charge. Seattle Children’s will make this information available in alternate formats upon request. Call the Family Resource Center at 206-987-2201.

This handout has been reviewed by clinical staff at Seattle Children’s. However, your child’s needs are unique. Before you act or rely upon this information, please talk with your child’s healthcare provider.

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