

## Catheter Care & Infection Control: *Staying Safe While Using an Indwelling Urinary Catheter*

### What is catheter-associated urinary tract infection?

A catheter-associated urinary tract infection (CAUTI) is an infection of the urinary tract, usually in the urethra or bladder, in someone who has a urinary catheter. Some patients need a urinary catheter; unfortunately this increases their risk of getting a CAUTI. However, even with the risk of infection, never attempt to remove your indwelling urinary catheter yourself.

### What are some signs of a CAUTI?

- Foul-smelling urine
- Cloudy, dark or bloody urine
- Inability to urinate
- Pain/burning upon urination
- Lower abdominal pain
- Fever, chills
- Nausea, vomiting
- Malaise (tiredness, lack of energy, overall ill feeling)
- Mental confusion, especially among the elderly

If you or your loved one is using an indwelling urinary catheter and has any of these symptoms, contact your doctor or nurse immediately!

### How to avoid getting a CAUTI:

- Review this brochure with your doctor or nurse.
- Always wash your hands with soap and hot water before and after you touch or handle an indwelling urinary catheter or a collection bag.
- Be sure to drink plenty of fluids, unless your healthcare provider tells you not to.
- The longer you use an indwelling urinary catheter, the more at risk you are of an infection. Catheters should be removed as soon as medically possible. Even with the risk of infection, however, if you have an indwelling urinary catheter, never attempt to remove it yourself.
- Even after removal of your catheter, you remain at risk of a CAUTI for up to 24 hours, so be on the lookout for the symptoms listed above.

### Where to get more information about indwelling urinary catheters:

- [www.healthsquare.com/mc/fgmc0874.htm](http://www.healthsquare.com/mc/fgmc0874.htm)
- [www.healthsquare.com/mc/fgmc0814.htm](http://www.healthsquare.com/mc/fgmc0814.htm)
- [www.webmd.com/hw/health\\_guide\\_atoz/ug2917.asp](http://www.webmd.com/hw/health_guide_atoz/ug2917.asp)
- [http://firstaid.webmd.com/inability\\_to\\_urinate\\_treatment\\_firstaid.htm](http://firstaid.webmd.com/inability_to_urinate_treatment_firstaid.htm)



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# Catheter Care & Infection Control

## Staying Safe While Using an Indwelling Urinary Catheter

### What is an indwelling urinary catheter?

An indwelling urinary catheter (sometimes called a Foley catheter) is a thin, flexible plastic or rubber tube used to drain urine from the bladder. A healthcare provider inserts the catheter through the urethra into the bladder and then inflates a small balloon at the end of the catheter inside the bladder to keep it in place. The free end of the catheter drains into a urine collection bag that can be emptied.

### Why do you need an indwelling urinary catheter?

You may need an indwelling urinary catheter in the following circumstances:

- You are unable to urinate due to a medical condition or an injury
- You are incontinent (unable to control urination)
- You are unable to move or have difficulty moving
- You have a pressure wound on the lower region of your body
- During or after an operation
- To measure urinary output accurately
- For comfort during a severe or terminal illness

### How long will you need an indwelling urinary catheter?

Your indwelling urinary catheter may have to remain in place for a short or long period of time, depending on the reason it was inserted. No matter how long it is in place, an indwelling urinary catheter raises your chance of getting a catheter-associated urinary tract infection (CAUTI). However, even with the risk of infection, if you have an indwelling urinary catheter, never attempt to remove it yourself.

For some conditions, temporary or intermittent (short-term) catheter may be used. Your healthcare provider will decide which type of catheter — indwelling or the one that is used periodically — is best for you.

### What to do if you or a loved one is sent home with an indwelling urinary catheter

- Review this brochure with your doctor or nurse.
- Always wash your hands with soap and hot water before and after touching/handling an indwelling urinary catheter or a collection bag.
- Be sure to drink plenty of fluids, unless your healthcare provider tells you not to.



- Make sure the tube connecting the catheter to the collection bag does not get twisted, kinked or disconnected from the bag.
- Unless you are using a “belly bag,” do the following:
  - Keep the drainage bag below the level of the bladder. The bag may be placed in an open, clean container on the floor.
  - Do not tug or pull on the catheter. Make sure that the drainage bag does not pull on the catheter.
  - Secure the catheter to your leg. Check with your healthcare provider about ways to secure your catheter to keep the bag from dragging and pulling on the catheter.
- Check the area around the insertion site for signs of infection or inflammation, such as irritated, swollen, red or tender skin or any discharge around the catheter. Notify your healthcare provider immediately if you see any of the symptoms above. Do not apply powder or lotion to the insertion site.
- Unless you have been told otherwise, it is okay to shower with your catheter and drainage bag in place. However, sitting or soaking in a bathtub is not recommended.
- Talk with your healthcare provider about emergency removal of the catheter.

### Emptying the urine collection bag:

The drainage bag will need to be emptied regularly — every three to four hours during the day, or more often if necessary — whenever it is at least half-full, and also prior to bedtime.

- Before and after draining the bag, wash your hands with soap and hot water. If possible, use disposable gloves in addition to hand washing when draining the bag.
- If you are emptying someone else’s collection bag, in addition to washing your hands you should also wear disposable gloves.
- If your health professional has instructed you to measure the amount of urine, do so before emptying the urine into the toilet.
- When emptying the bag, do not separate the catheter from the drainage bag.

### What to do if you or a loved one has an indwelling urinary catheter while in a hospital or in a long term care facility?

- Review this brochure with your doctor or nurse.
- Make sure your care provider washes their hands with soap and hot water before and after touching/handling an indwelling urinary catheter or a collection bag.
- The longer your indwelling urinary catheter remains in place the more likely it is that you will develop a catheter-associated urinary tract infection (CAUTI). Indwelling urinary catheters should be removed as soon as they are no longer needed. Even with the risk of infection, however, if you have an indwelling urinary catheter, never attempt to remove it yourself.
- Unless a “belly bag” is being used, make sure your care provider keeps the collection bag below the level of the bladder — the bag should not be kept on top of the bed or stretcher.
- Make sure the tube connecting the catheter to the drainage bag does not get twisted, kinked or disconnected from the bag.
- Ask your care provider about whether a device can be used to secure the catheter, to prevent the catheter from pulling and causing trauma to the urethra.
- Do not interrupt the drainage system unless it is absolutely necessary.
- If the catheter is not draining, call a healthcare provider immediately. Never try to remove the catheter yourself.