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Guiding the way to confident living
with intermittent catheterization

Frequently Asked Questions

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navigate topics or return to the main menu by
pressing the home button.



Frequently asked questions by topic

We have compiled a comprehensive list of frequently asked questions. Many of these answers were developed by a team of experts, however, this information doesn't replace seeking medical advice from your healthcare professional. [Click the headings to explore each topic.](#)

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Guiding the way to confident living with intermittent catheterization

1. General concerns

1.1 What are the benefits of intermittent catheterizing (IC)?

1.2 Will I need follow-up visits once I'm comfortable catheterizing?

1.3 Does IC hurt?

1.4 Will my sex life be affected by catheterization?

1.1 What are the benefits of IC?¹

IC is considered the best and safest method of catheterization, and it's also more convenient and comfortable than other methods. Unlike indwelling catheters (also known as Foley catheters), which are kept in place inside your bladder with a balloon and changed every few months, intermittent catheters are inserted to drain the bladder and then immediately removed, so there's no need to wear it all day. Compared with indwelling catheters, they can lower the risk of urinary tract infections (UTIs) and other problems. Intermittent catheters come in many different sizes and models to suit your circumstances and lifestyle.

IC devices mean catheterizing doesn't have to interfere with your independence, your sexual relationships, or with living your life fully and in comfort.

1.2 Will I need follow-up visits once I'm comfortable catheterizing?²

You should be following up with your healthcare professional once a year, and whenever you have issues or need further advice.



General concerns

1.3 Does IC hurt?³

No, catheterizing shouldn't cause you pain, but it can feel strange at first. For example, you might feel like you need to urinate even as you're catheterizing. Make sure you're always following the instructions that come with your catheter and never use force. Please speak with your healthcare professional if you're experiencing pain.

Remember, your first catheter isn't necessarily the one you'll stick with, and it may take some time for you to find your perfect fit. There are many different types and sizes of catheter and each one has their own technique for being used correctly and comfortably.

1.4 Will my sex life be affected by catheterization?⁴

Using an IC shouldn't stop you from enjoying a full sex life. Just try to empty your bladder beforehand, as sex can sometimes lead to leakage.



2. About catheters

2.1 I'm not happy with my catheter, how can I try a new one?

2.2 Do catheters have expiration dates?

2.3 Can I use a catheter while pregnant?

2.4 How much fluid should I drink?

2.1 I'm not happy with my catheter, how can I try a new one?

Don't worry if your current catheter doesn't feel quite right, there are plenty of options to try and your healthcare professional can help you find the best fit for you.

Many brands also provide free samples so you can try different types to find what you like best. Remember, there's no reason you must stick to just one catheter model, some people switch between several depending on their lifestyle.

2.2 Do catheters have expiration dates?

Yes, they do, so be sure to check the packaging.

2.3 Can I use a catheter while pregnant?

Generally, it's safe to catheterize during pregnancy, but talk to your healthcare professional throughout your pregnancy to see if this changes. You may find that as your pregnancy progresses, it becomes easier to catheterize lying down.



About catheters

2.4 How much fluid should I drink?^{5,6}

You should drink between 1.5 and 2 liters a day unless your doctor has advised you otherwise. Try not to drink too many caffeinated or alcoholic drinks, as they can increase your urine volume and irritate your bladder.

You may need to drink less if you're catheterizing more than ten times a day, have large volumes, or clear urine. Drinking lots of water before bed might mean you'll need to catheterize overnight, so get most of your water intake during daytime hours so you don't have to catheterize at night. If you have any concerns, speak with your healthcare professional.

You may need to drink more if

- you have a urinary tract infection (UTI)
- your urine is dark (it should be straw-colored)



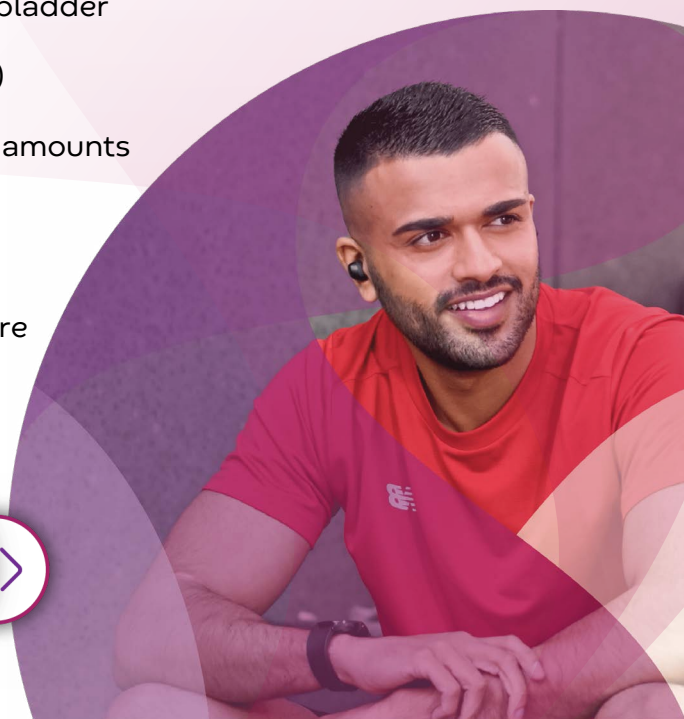
3. Help & advice

- 3.1 When should I call my healthcare professional?
- 3.2 I have an abnormal urine test, should I worry?
- 3.3 What should I do if my urine has a strong smell, or looks concentrated?
- 3.4 My urine changed color, should I be worried?
- 3.5 Where can I find help if I need it?
- 3.6 There's blood in my urine, what do I do?
- 3.7 What do I do if it's difficult to insert the catheter?
- 3.8 What if the catheter won't come out?

3.1 When should I call my healthcare professional?^{5,7-9}

You should call your healthcare professional if you notice any of the following

- bladder spasms (painful cramps and sudden urine leaks)
- frequent spots of blood in your urine, or an episode of heavier bleeding
- difficulty passing the catheter into your bladder
- any signs of a urinary tract infection (UTI)
- consistently draining smaller than usual amounts of urine
- urine leaks between catheterizations
- changes in skin color or broken skin where you insert your catheter
- difficulty obtaining supplies



Help & advice

3.2 I have an abnormal urine test, should I worry?¹⁰

It's not unusual to sometimes have an abnormal urine test (known as a urinalysis) and this doesn't always mean you have an infection. You should only be treated for a UTI if you're showing symptoms.

Remember, your urine test is just a snapshot in time, and lots of different things can impact the result. Because of this, performing these tests routinely is not recommended; such tests are recommended only if there's a change in possible signs of UTI. If you have any concerns, always talk to your healthcare professional.

3.3 What should I do if my urine has a strong smell, or looks concentrated?^{5,11}

While this may be alarming, don't worry. Many things can impact how urine looks and smells, including foods like asparagus. You may also just need to drink more fluids, unless otherwise indicated by your healthcare professional. Between 1.5 and 2 liters a day is recommended, and most of that should be non-caffeinated and non-alcoholic beverages, like water.

3.4 My urine changed color, should I be worried?¹²

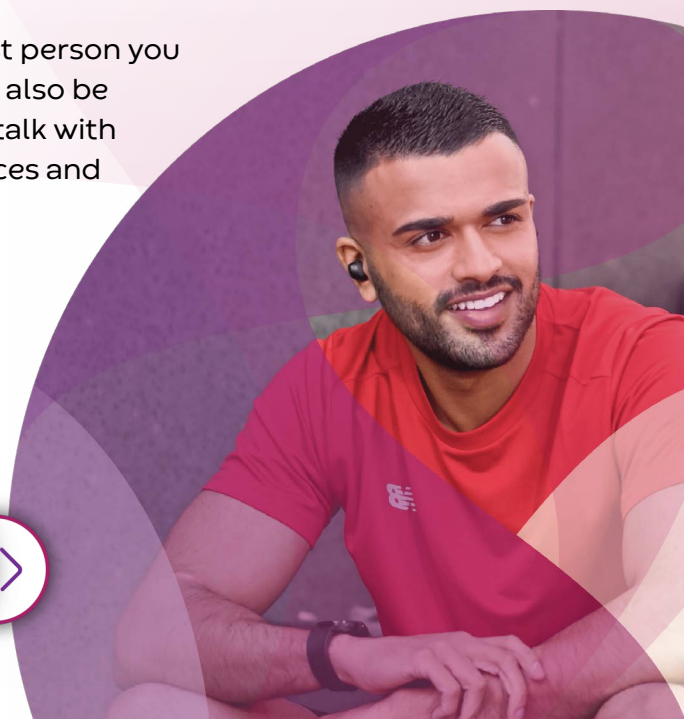
Many different things can affect urine color, and it isn't always a cause for concern. Simple things like eating certain foods (like beetroot/beets) or certain medications (such as vitamins) can change urine color, or you may just have drunk less fluids than usual, or sweated more, that day.

If you notice your urine is cloudy, very dark, or looks pink or red, you should contact your healthcare professional.

3.5 Where can I find help if I need it?

Your healthcare professional should be the first person you contact with any medical questions. You might also be interested in meeting with a support group to talk with others who are going through similar experiences and to find emotional support.

Ask your nurse if there are any of these groups locally, but even if there aren't, you can find virtual groups online.



Help & advice

3.6 There's blood in my urine, what do I do?¹³

A little blood (small visible spots) in your urine can be common, especially in the early days when you're still adapting to catheterizing. It can be a sign of improper placement of the catheter, especially if you haven't spotted blood before.

If you're frequently noticing blood in your urine, bright red blood that persists, continuous bleeding, or clots seek medical attention, preferably from your healthcare professional. If you're taking anticoagulant medications, mention it to your healthcare professional, as they can cause bleeding.

Keep a note of how often you're noticing blood in your urine and talk to your healthcare professional about this. They might suggest a different catheter type for you - make sure you always follow the instructions for each catheter.

3.7 What do I do if it's difficult to insert the catheter?³

It can be tricky to insert a catheter at first, but make sure you never force it. If you're having trouble with passing the catheter into your bladder, try some of the following

- relax and take a few deep breaths
- try coughing
- try a different position
- try adding more lubricant if you're using an uncoated catheter
- re-adjust the angle of the penis to 45 degrees pointed to the ceiling (for men)

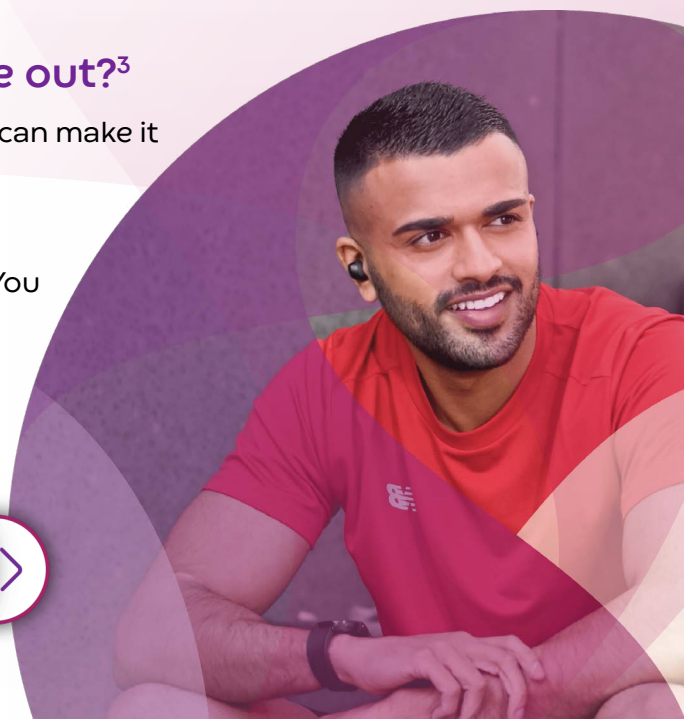
Never continue with the insertion if you feel any kind of resistance. If you fully or partially remove the catheter, don't reattempt to insert the same one, as this can lead to infection. If you continue having issues, contact your healthcare professional for advice.

3.8 What if the catheter won't come out?³

It's important not to panic, as becoming tense can make it more difficult to remove the catheter.

Take a few minutes to try to relax. Cough while attempting to remove it or try a new position. You can also try having a warm bath.

If you're still struggling, contact your healthcare professional for advice.



4. Catheter considerations

- 4.1 Can I hurt myself if I use my catheter wrong?
- 4.2 I have a compromised immune system; will I need to take special precautions?
- 4.3 Are there any risks to having my bladder overly full?
- 4.4 How often should I do a urine test?
- 4.5 What are the risks of intermittent catheterization (IC)?

4.1 Can I hurt myself if I use my catheter wrong?⁷

Injuries can happen if you force your catheter into your bladder. If you ever feel like you can't smoothly insert your catheter, take a moment to relax, take a few deep breaths, and try again. If you can't successfully insert it, ask your healthcare professional for advice.

4.2 I have a compromised immune system; will I need to take special precautions?¹⁰

Your healthcare professional will tell you if you need to take any extra steps to ensure safe catheterizing if you're living with a condition that compromises your immune system.

4.3 Are there any risks to having my bladder overly full?⁶

Leaving your bladder to become overly full can increase your risk of infection and injuries like damage to the bladder muscle and backflow of urine into the kidney. So, it's important to stick to your catheterization schedule and work with your healthcare professional to make sure it's working well for you.



Catheter considerations

4.4 How often should I do a urine test?

Your healthcare professional will be able to tell you when to do a urine test and how often you should do one.

4.5 What are the risks of IC?

IC is a popular choice when it comes to catheterization, but that doesn't mean it's entirely risk-free. Some problems are simply due to a lack of awareness about technique or hygiene, so it's important to talk with your healthcare professional to understand how to correctly use your IC device and ensure your catheterizing experience is as safe and comfortable as possible.

Some issues you may experience include

Blood in your urine

You may experience this early on when you're still adapting to catheterizing. Get in touch with your healthcare professional if you continue to have blood in your urine.

Irritation in the urethra

The urethra is the tube that carries urine from your bladder and is also where you insert your catheter. You may sometimes feel irritation along this tube as you adapt to using a catheter. Continued irritation and swelling is known as urethritis and can lead to scarring of the urethra, known as urethral strictures which cause the urethra to become narrower.

False passage

This can happen when a catheter doesn't follow the urethra and passes through the wall of the urethra instead.

Epididymitis

Epididymitis is the swelling of one of the tubes at the back of the testicles. Often caused by an infection.

Urinary tract infections (UTIs)

Infections of the urinary tract can occur with your IC device but are less common compared to other catheter options.

Bladder stones

You may also experience bladder stones, which can be caused by a pubic hair accidentally being inserted with the catheter.



5. Urinary tract infections

5.1 Am I more likely to get an infection when I catheterize myself?

5.2 What can I do to prevent urinary tract infections (UTIs)?

5.3 What should I do if I think I have a UTI?

5.4 What is a UTI?

5.5 What are the symptoms of a UTI?

5.1 Am I more likely to get an infection when I catheterize myself?⁷

Catheterizing yourself does come with a risk of infection, but it's lower than if you were using an indwelling Foley catheter or weren't fully emptying your bladder. Good hygiene is key to keeping infection at bay, so always make sure to thoroughly wash your hands before catheterizing.

5.2 What can I do to prevent UTIs?⁷

Always make sure you thoroughly wash your hands and clean the genital area before catheterizing to prevent UTIs. You should also stick to a catheterization schedule, so you don't risk having an overly full bladder. Drinking plenty of fluids (especially water) is also important to prevent infection.

You can also consider a closed system catheter or one that uses a sleeve to minimize direct contact with your catheter.

5.3 What should I do if I think I have a UTI?³

If you think you have a UTI, you should tell your healthcare professional immediately. UTIs can quickly become worse, so it's important to catch them as early as possible.



Urinary tract infections

UTIs are usually treated with antibiotics, and you should also be drinking plenty of water during this time.

5.4 What is a UTI?¹⁴⁻¹⁶

A UTI is most often caused when bacteria enter the urinary system. They can happen to anyone regardless of if they catheterize or not and are common in women. However, the risk of a UTI increases in men and women when they catheterize. UTIs are usually treated with antibiotics, and it's important to report them to your healthcare professional as soon as possible.

Infections can happen in any part of the urinary tract, though they usually occur in the bladder. They can also occur in the urethra, ureters (which connect your kidneys to your bladder), or kidneys.

Signs that you might have a UTI include

- a more frequent or urgent than usual need to urinate
- blood in your urine
- cramps or pain in your groin or lower abdomen
- fever, chills, or flu-like symptoms
- painful urination or pain in your lower back
- nausea or vomiting
- more leaking between catheterizations than usual
- confusion
- increased spasticity in legs if you have a neurogenic condition

The following symptoms are not indicative of UTI unless you also have one or more of the previous mentioned signs.

- cloudy or smelly urine
- sediment or mucus in the urine

If you experience any change in what you consider normal, contact your healthcare professional. Good hygiene is essential to minimizing the risk of UTIs, so always make sure you wash your hands thoroughly and cleanse the genital area before catheterizing.



Urinary tract infections

5.5 What are the symptoms of a UTI?¹⁴⁻¹⁶

The symptoms of a UTI include

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- blood in your urine
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- pain in your lower back
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The following symptoms are not indicative of UTI unless you also have one or more of the previous mentioned signs.

- cloudy or smelly urine
- sediment or mucus in the urine

If you experience any change in what you consider normal for you, contact your healthcare professional.



6. Catheter technique

6.1 How do I use my catheter?

6.2 What equipment do I need?

6.3 How will I know I've reached the bladder?

6.4 How many catheters can I get per month? What happens if I need more?

6.1 How do I use my catheter?⁷

Your healthcare professional should show you how to use your catheter and help you decide which catheter is best for you, so you might try out a few different options. Your catheter will also come with step-by-step instructions on how to use it.

You should be comfortable and capable of using your device in any setting, so if you're struggling, you may want to try a different device until you find the perfect fit. Catheters come in different sizes and with different methods of lubrication and other features that might make it easier for you to use. Being confident using your catheter will also help reduce the risk of any complications while catheterizing.

6.2 What equipment do I need?^{3,10}

You'll need

- your catheter
- hand or wet wipes or soap and water
- something to drain your urine into (if you aren't using a toilet)
- lubricant (if you're using a manually coated catheter)

Make sure to have all this ready before you begin. Hygiene is key to making sure you minimize the risk of infection, so always make sure your hands are clean before starting.



Catheter technique

6.3 How will I know I've reached the bladder?^{3,11}

You'll be able to tell when your catheter has reached the bladder because you'll see urine start to flow.

6.4 How many catheters can I get per month? What happens if I need more?

Your healthcare professional will give you a prescription that says how many catheters you need per month. It's important to work with your healthcare professional to know how many catheters you'll need so you're never at risk of running out.

Being unable to catheterize can cause infections and damage to your bladder and kidneys, so always make sure you have enough supplies.



7. Types of catheters

7.1 Are there different types of catheters?

7.2 Are there any catheters that are discreet?

7.3 Do I have to use the same catheter model I started with, or can I try other types and brands?

7.1 Are there different types of catheters?

Yes, there are lots of different catheter brands, types available, so if your first catheter doesn't work for you, don't worry.

Catheters come in a variety of designs and with different features and different methods of use, so you may find some easier than others.

Some people even decide to use several different types, for example, a more discreet one for when they're out and about and a different one at home.

7.2 Are there any catheters that are discreet?¹⁵

Yes, there are. Some look just like a cosmetic or marker pen and fit into a pocket or bag just as easily.

7.3 Do I have to use the same catheter model I started with, or can I try other types and brands?¹⁵

Your healthcare professional will be happy to help you find the catheter that works best for you. Catheters come in many different sizes and models, so if the first one you tried doesn't feel like the right fit, don't worry.

Many brands also offer free samples for you to try. Make sure you talk to your healthcare professional before you make the change so they can help you make decisions. You might even want to use several different models, for example, a more discreet one for when you're out, and another for use at home.



8. Traveling

8.1 Can I travel or go on vacation if I use a catheter?

8.2 How can I catheterize safely in unfamiliar places?

8.3 How do I prepare for traveling abroad?

8.4 How do I catheterize during a trip?

8.1 Can I travel or go on vacation if I use a catheter?³

With a little pre-planning, there's no reason you can't travel or take a vacation while you're using a catheter.

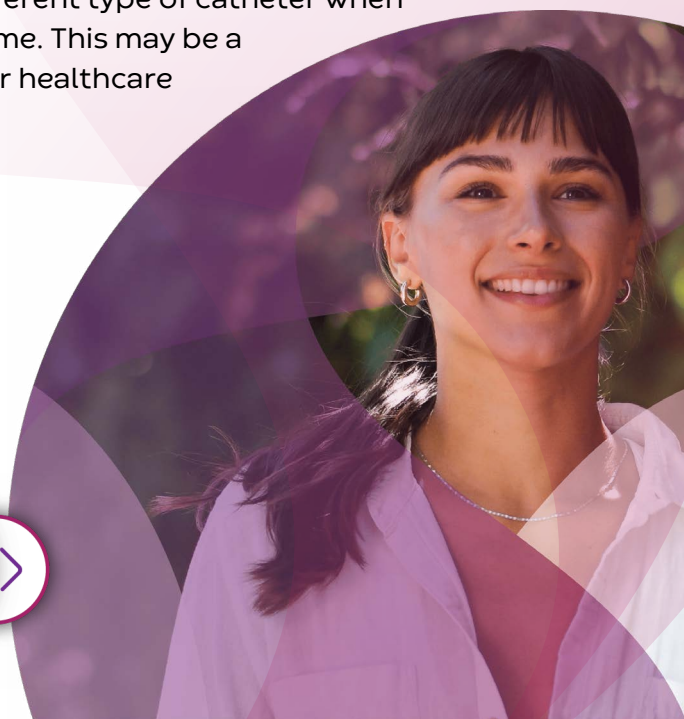
Just remember to pack a few extra supplies so you're fully prepared. You should also try to split these between your checked luggage and your cabin bag just in case one gets lost.

Some people also like to take a letter from their healthcare professional that explains the purpose of their catheters if they're questioned at security.

If traveling for extended periods, you can contact the manufacturer of your catheter to ask where to purchase more supplies in the country or region you're in.

8.2 How can I catheterize safely in unfamiliar places?¹⁵

Some people use different brands of catheters throughout the day, depending on where they are. So, you might want to use a different type of catheter when you're out and about compared to being at home. This may be a self-lubricating model, or you could talk to your healthcare professional about a closed system catheter.



Traveling

8.3 How do I prepare for traveling abroad?³

There are a few things you can do to prepare for travel

- make sure you bring enough supplies
- keep enough intermittent catheterization (IC) devices in your cabin bag in easy reach
- check with your travel and hotel companies if you need any special accommodations
- check to see if you can get more catheters at your destination, if needed

If you can, try and stick to your regular catheterization routine as much as possible.

You might also want to ask your healthcare professional to write a letter explaining your IC devices as this might make it easier at places like airport security.

8.4 How do I catheterize during a trip?⁷

If you know you'll be traveling and won't have access to a toilet, you can ask your healthcare professional about a closed system catheter. These can be used without needing to drain your urine into a toilet or container as they have their own collection bags. You can discreetly drain your bladder somewhere where you have privacy or won't be disturbed.

Plan ahead, and make sure you have extra supplies. Speak to your healthcare professional about what options are available.



9. IC at home

9.1 I'm anxious/fearful about performing intermittent catheterization (IC) at home without my healthcare professional, is this feeling normal?

9.2 What happens if I can't do IC by myself?

9.1 I'm anxious/fearful about performing IC at home without my healthcare professional, is this feeling normal?^{7,8,17}

It can be scary to try catheterizing by yourself for the first time, but there are some steps you can take to help you get used to catheterizing and minimize issues

- make sure you clearly understand the steps of using your device and talk to your healthcare professional if you ever need more advice
- make sure you're in a quiet place where you won't be rushed or disturbed
- have everything you need ready
- find the position that feels the most comfortable for you
- take a few deep breaths before you start – being tense can make insertion harder

It's perfectly normal to not get it right straight away. Take your time and never try to force your catheter. If you can, talk with someone you trust, so you don't get overwhelmed.

Your healthcare professional may also be able to provide you with local support groups where you can discuss your experiences in an open and supportive environment.

9.2 What happens if I can't do IC by myself?⁷

If you have a caregiver who can help you, then they can be included in your training to learn how to catheterize.

If this isn't possible, you can ask your healthcare professional about what options are available to you.



10. Diet & supplements

10.1 Will I have to be on a special diet?

10.2 Are there any supplements recommended for people who catheterize?

10.1 Will I have to be on a special diet?¹⁵

It's important to maintain a healthy diet to avoid constipation. Unless your healthcare professional says otherwise, you shouldn't need to change your diet.

One thing you may be asked to do is drink more water, this is because it'll help flush the urine from your bladder and ensure it stays healthy. Before making any big changes, speak with your healthcare professional, as drinking too much water may also not be advisable.

10.2 Are there any supplements recommended for people who catheterize?

Please ask your healthcare professional for advice before taking any supplements.



11. Knowing when to catheterize

- 11.1 How will I know when to catheterize?
- 11.2 Do I have to catheterize at night?
- 11.3 What should I do if I forget to catheterize?
- 11.4 How often do I need to catheterize?
- 11.5 What happens if I don't catheterize as often as I should?
- 11.6 I sometimes leak between catheterizations; how do I fix this?

11.1 How will I know when to catheterize?²

In the beginning, your healthcare professional will work with you to set a schedule. As you adjust to catheterizing, you may find your own routine of knowing when you need to empty your bladder. Different reasons might affect how you manage your frequency (e.g., when you know when to catheterize because of urgency, sensation, or time), and once you are used to your schedule, you can adjust it to fit your lifestyle.

Remember not to allow your bladder to overfill (>400-500 mL) and that the amount of liquids you drink can affect how frequently you need to catheterize.

11.2 Do I have to catheterize at night?

For most people, it's enough to simply catheterize before you go to bed, but your healthcare professional will advise you on what's best for you.

11.3 What should I do if I forget to catheterize?

If you forget to catheterize, just make sure you do as soon as you remember, then continue following your normal schedule.



Knowing when to catheterize

11.4 How often do I need to catheterize?¹⁵

Usually, you'll need to catheterize 4-6 times a day, or once every 4-6 hours during the day and once before you sleep. If you're able to feel it, you should catheterize when your bladder feels full.

In the beginning, your healthcare professional will help you find a regular routine. They'll consider your unique circumstances and medical condition, plus your fluid intake. They'll also help you adjust your schedule where needed, so make sure you keep them updated on how you're progressing and if you notice you're passing too much or too little urine.

11.5 What happens if I don't catheterize as often as I should?⁷

If you miss your scheduled catheterization time every now and again it shouldn't be a problem, but if you're missing them frequently, then you could be at risk of a urinary tract infection (UTI), distended bladder wall, or leaking.

Too much urine in your bladder can also cause serious issues if it backflows to the kidneys.

It can be helpful to set reminder alarms so you always know when you should catheterize.

11.6 I sometimes leak between catheterizations; how do I fix this?¹⁸

Leaking can happen when your bladder is too full. Try catheterizing more frequently and see if this helps. It can also be a sign of a UTI, especially if accompanied by other UTI symptoms. You should talk to your healthcare professional if this is the case or if you find you're leaking frequently.



12. Catheter sizing

12.1 Why are there different catheter lengths?

12.2 What does French size mean?

12.3 Which size and length catheter should I use?

12.1 Why are there different catheter lengths?

There's no 'one size fits all' with catheters, so it's important to discuss options with your healthcare professional. Catheters made for males, for example, need to be longer than catheters made for females, but some women prefer to use 'male' length catheters for reasons including ease of use if they need a longer length to reach the toilet.

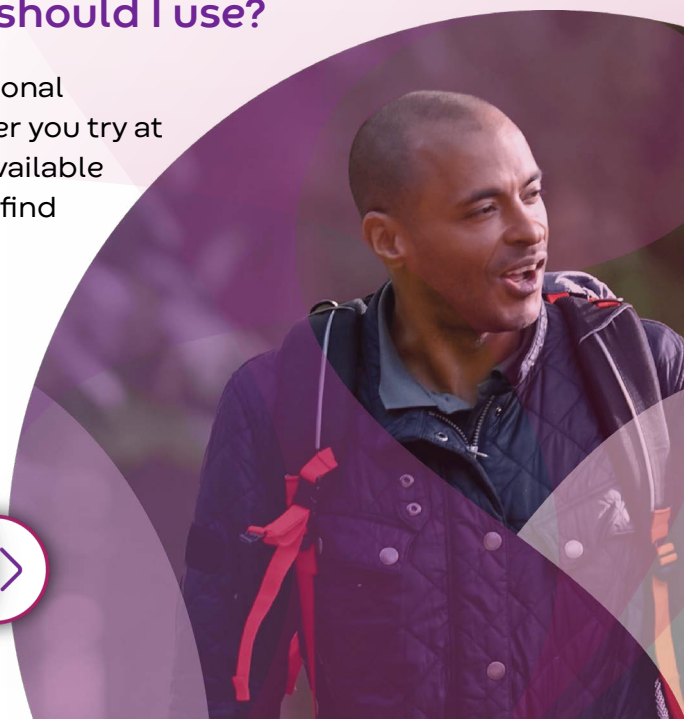
12.2 What does French size mean?¹⁵

French size is the outer diameter of a catheter's tube. So, a larger French size means a wider tube, and a smaller one will have a narrower tube. You might also see this size marked with 'Ch'.

It's important to work with your healthcare professional to find out which French size is best for you, as it affects the flow of urine, ease of use, and the likelihood of any leaks.

12.3 Which size and length catheter should I use?

This depends on what your healthcare professional recommends for you. Don't worry if the catheter you try at first doesn't feel right, there's lots of options available and your healthcare professional can help you find the right fit.



13. Catheter tips

13.1 What are the different types of catheter tips? Which one should I use?

13.2 What is the difference between a Coudé tip and a straight tip catheter?

13.3 When using a Coudé tip catheter, does it matter how it's inserted?

13.1 What are the different types of catheter tips? Which one should I use?^{15,19}

Just like sizes and lengths, catheter tips come in different styles to suit different people. Your healthcare professional will help you find the best one for you.

Catheter tips can either be

- straight (or nelaton) tipped
- Coudé tipped

Coudé means 'elbow' in French, and this sort of tip is bent, so it points towards the ceiling when you insert it. Coudé tips come in three different types

- tapered tip (the most common and has a firmer tip)
- olive tipped (named because it has a circular bead at the tip to help it move past obstacles, for example, an enlarged prostate)
- tiemann tipped (the tip is longer after the bend making it a bit more flexible)



Catheter tips

13.2 What is the difference between a Coudé tip and a straight tip catheter?

A straight tip catheter is, as the name suggests, straight. A Coudé catheter has a tip that bends and is often chosen as an easier insertion option for those with an enlarged prostate.

13.3 When using a Coudé tip catheter, does it matter how it's inserted?

The Coudé tip should always be positioned so the bend points up towards the ceiling. The tip should have a mark like an arrow or a notch to show you the direction of the bend. Your healthcare professional will be able to show you how to use this type of catheter.



14. Catheter usage

- 14.1 How long will it take to empty my bladder when I use intermittent catheterization (IC) devices?
- 14.2 When can I remove the catheter? How do I know my bladder is empty?
- 14.3 Will I leak after using a catheter? Will I need to wear a pad?
- 14.4 What if no urine is draining?
- 14.5 How much urine should I drain in one IC?
- 14.6 Does the amount of fluid I drink affect the number of times I need to catheterize?
- 14.7 Should I keep track of how much urine I pass?
- 14.8 I have large amounts of urine when I catheterize. Is this normal?
- 14.9 My urine volume is too low when catheterizing. What should I do?

14.1 How long will it take to empty my bladder when I use IC devices?

This depends on the type, and size of your catheter, and how much urine you have in your bladder at the time, but you can generally expect catheterizing to take a few minutes. Of course, in the beginning, you should give yourself as much time as necessary to catheterize with comfort.

14.2 When can I remove the catheter? How do I know my bladder is empty?

Once the flow of urine stops, you can remove your catheter. Just bear in mind that it might start again as you remove the catheter, so do it slowly, bit by bit. Your bladder may still contain urine that is just below the draining eyelets (openings at the tip of the catheter), so remove it slowly and let any remaining urine drain from your bladder.



Catheter usage

14.3 Will I leak after using a catheter? Will I need to wear a pad?²

This can vary from person to person, and you should always discuss this with your healthcare professional so you can know what to expect.

For most people who catheterize, leaking between catheterizations isn't common, but if you do notice this, it could be a sign of other issues like bladder spasms or infection, so be sure to let your healthcare professional know.

It can help to pay attention to how much urine you get when you drain your bladder, so you can start to understand what a normal amount looks like and notice any significant changes.

14.4 What if no urine is draining?^{13,15}

There are a few things that can stop a catheter working well, including

- not inserting it far enough
- already having an empty bladder
- dehydration (or not having drunk enough fluids that day)
- inserting it into the vagina and not the urethra (for females)

Try readjusting your catheter and see if this helps start the urine flow.

Other issues may also prevent you being able to catheterize properly including using the wrong length or type of catheter, suffering from constipation, or sediment and stones in the urine. Talk to your healthcare professional if you think any of these may be an issue.

14.5 How much urine should I drain in one IC?¹³

Lots of things can affect how much urine you drain. If you find that you are draining more than 500 mL from your bladder when you catheterize, you should talk with your healthcare professional as you may need to catheterize more frequently or adjust your fluid intake.



Catheter usage

14.6 Does the amount of fluid I drink affect the number of times I need to catheterize?^{5,18}

Yes it does, so be sure to share this information with your healthcare professional, they'll make a catheterization schedule for you that matches how often you usually drink throughout the day.

14.7 Should I keep track of how much urine I pass?⁵

Yes, this is useful for your healthcare professional but it's also useful to you to understand what a normal amount of urine looks like, so you'll notice if anything ever seems unusual.

14.8 I have large amounts of urine when I catheterize. Is this normal?¹¹

This could be for several reasons. Try catheterizing more frequently and report this back to your healthcare professional so they can help you create a more suitable schedule.

It's also a good idea to keep a diary of how much fluid you pass every time you catheterize, as this will help you and your healthcare professional notice if things ever seem unusual. You should be passing less than 500 mL every time you catheterize.

14.9 My urine volume is too low when catheterizing. What should I do?¹³

You can try the following to check if the issue is the placement of your catheter or the actual device

- slowly insert the catheter a little further, about an inch at a time
- slowly remove the catheter and check the eyelet holes for blockages

If you're a male who has been diagnosed with benign prostate hyperplasia and using a straight catheter, you can speak with your healthcare professional about switching to a Coudé tip catheter, as this can offer better flexibility.

If nothing changes, you can talk to your healthcare professional who can advise you or might recommend a different kind of catheter.



15. Hygiene tips

15.1 Can I re-use my hydrophilic catheters?

15.2 How do I store my catheters?

15.3 What should I do if I'm having my period?

15.4 What do I do if I drop the catheter, or if it touches an unsanitized surface?

15.5 I can't wash my hands before catheterizing, what do I do?

15.6 Why is it important to wash my hands and genital area?

15.1 Can I re-use my hydrophilic catheters?¹⁵

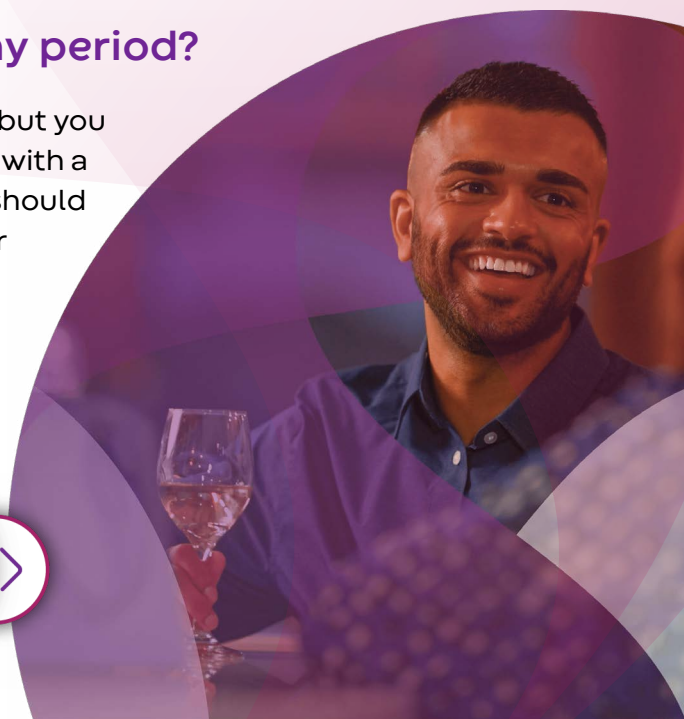
No, hydrophilic catheters shouldn't be used more than once. These catheters are sterile when first opened and are designed for single use. Reusing these catheters may cause discomfort as well as increase the risk of urinary tract infections (UTIs).

15.2 How do I store my catheters?

You should store your catheters in a clean, dry place, away from light and heat. Make sure your catheters haven't been opened, as they may not be sterile once they're open and this can increase your risk of infection. You should follow the manufacturer's instructions on storage, as the positioning can affect the proper functioning of the catheters (e.g., liquids and coatings might shift or drain), and never store them folded.

15.3 What should I do if I'm having my period?

This shouldn't change the way you catheterize but you should take extra care to wash the genital area with a pH-neutral soap or wipe before you start. You should also make sure you're changing your tampon or sanitary pad often to maintain good genital hygiene.



Hygiene tips

15.4 What do I do if I drop the catheter, or if it touches an unsanitized surface?^{5,10}

You should use a new catheter if this happens, because your catheter may have picked up bacteria that could cause an infection.

15.5 I can't wash my hands before catheterizing, what do I do?⁹

You may find from time to time you have to catheterize in a location that doesn't have access to soap and water. Fortunately, there are several things you can do to reduce the risk of infection, including:

- wiping your hands with a disposable wet wipe or hand sanitizer
- you can also ask your healthcare professional about a closed system catheter, or a catheter with a no-touch sleeve, if you're often unable to clean your hands before catheterizing

15.6 Why is it important to wash my hands and genital area?²⁰

Cleaning your hands and genital area is essential to making sure you keep the risk of infection minimized. You can wash these areas with soap and water or a wipe.

- For uncircumcised males, it's best to pull back your foreskin to make sure the area is fully clean
- For females, when spreading your labia, you should wipe from front to back



16. Catheter disposal methods

16.1 How do I dispose of catheters?

16.2 Are catheters recyclable?

16.1 How do I dispose of catheters?

You can throw your catheter away in a normal trash can but pay attention to any local guidance about disposing of medical devices.

16.2 Are catheters recyclable?

Unfortunately, your catheter isn't recyclable, but depending on the type, the packaging may be. Check the information that comes with your device to see what you can recycle.



17. Duration of use

17.1 How do I know when I can stop using a catheter?

17.2 How long do people usually have to use a catheter?

17.3 How long will I need to do intermittent catheterization (IC) for?

17.1 How do I know when I can stop using a catheter?^{15,18,21}

This is a decision your healthcare professional will make after looking at your specific circumstances. If you've noticed that you're draining less urine than usual (or less than 100 mL) more than three times in a row, then you should talk to your healthcare professional.

17.2 How long do people usually have to use a catheter?

This changes from person to person so there's no single answer. You should discuss this with your healthcare professional when you first start catheterizing but remember that any prediction can change as time goes on.

17.3 How long will I need to do IC for?

Your healthcare professional will decide how long you'll need to use a catheter for. It may be a short-term solution for you, or it might be something you'll need to do for a longer period. It's also important to remember that these plans can change over time, so whatever answer you get to this question today may be different in the future as your condition changes.

Once you've become used to using your IC device, catheterizing shouldn't come between you and living a full and independent life.



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