



## Self Catheterization

### MU Patient Education Series

#### Definition:

Intermittent catheterization is a safe and simple technique which refers to the periodic insertion of a thin, flexible, hollow tube through the urethra and into the bladder to empty urine from the bladder.

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#### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

- Why do I need to self-catheterize?
  - Some people are unable to empty their bladder completely, or not at all. If urine collects and remains in the bladder, it can result in infection, discomfort, damage to the bladder due to distention, or damage to the kidneys. It is important to drain urine from the bladder.
- How do I know what size catheter I need?
  - Your healthcare provider will work with you to determine the size catheter that will best suit your needs. The outer diameter of a catheter is sized in Frenches (FR).
- How often do I need to catheterize? And how much urine volume should I expect?
  - It depends on individual circumstances and medical history. How much you drink also affects how often you catheterize. In order to avoid over-distention of the bladder, you should try to catheterize before your bladder contains more than 400 mL (about 13 oz). Work with your nurse or clinical advisor to establish a suitable routine. You may, however, need to adjust the amount of fluid you drink and the times you catheterize to avoid over-distention of the bladder.
- What are signs of an over-distended bladder?
  - The lower part of your abdomen looks bloated or feels very full
  - Restlessness



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- Sweating
- Chills
- Headache
- Nausea
- The inability to urinate, despite an urge
- Pain in the lower abdomen
- Leakage of a small amount of urine

If you suspect that you have an over-distended bladder, you could try self-care measures at home. Since home care is limited you may need to contact your physician as soon as possible.

#### STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS:

What you will need:

- Catheter—the size and type recommended by your healthcare provider
- Soap and water
- Washcloth or disposable wet wipes
- Lubrication jelly—use a water-soluble lubricant, NOT petroleum jelly
- Collection container or toilet



### **Male Intermittent Self-Catheterization**

**Step 1:** if you are not over a toilet, have a container ready to drain urine into.

**Step 2:** Wash your hands with soap and water.

**Step 3:** Wash or use a disposable wet wipe to cleanse the genitals, pulling the foreskin back and cleansing it if uncircumcised.

**Step 4:** For a hydrophilic coated catheter, soak the catheter according to the manufacturer's instructions. For an uncoated catheter, apply lubrication jelly to the first 6 inches (15 cm) of the catheter.

**Step 5:** Choose a comfortable position (standing or sitting).

**Step 6:** Lift the penis gently upward and outward, and hold it at about a 60- to 75-degree angle.

**Step 7:** Slowly guide the lubricated catheter into the urethra without touching the part of the catheter that is entering the body.

**Step 8:** Continue to slide the catheter slowly and smoothly until urine begins to flow; this will happen when about 6 to 8 inches of the catheter have been inserted.

- Sometimes the catheter is hard to push just as it reaches the bladder. This is normal. Do not force the catheter. Use gentle, firm pressure on the catheter until it passes this point.
- It can be helpful to "bear down" (as though passing a bowel movement) or cough to pass the catheter past this resistance point.
- Relax and let the urine flow from your bladder into the toilet or container.

**Step 9:** When urine stops flowing, slowly and gently remove the catheter. Note that additional urine may drain as you are taking out the catheter.

**Step 10:** Wipe any remaining lubricant off your penis, and if you are uncircumcised, gently pull your foreskin back into position

**Step 11:** Dispose of the catheter and any packaging.

**Step 12:** Wash your hands with soap and water.

**\*NOTE** that some males will benefit from using a coude tip catheter (one with a curve at the tip) to help maneuver the catheter past the prostate gland. Your healthcare provider can advise if this is the best option for you.



### **Female Intermittent Self-Catheterization**

**Step 1:** If you are not over a toilet, have a container ready to drain urine into.

**Step 2:** Wash your hands with soap and water.

**Step 3:** Wash or use a disposable wet wipe to cleanse the genitals (from front to back).

**Step 4:** For a hydrophilic coated catheter, soak the catheter according to the manufacturer's instructions. For an uncoated catheter, apply a water soluble lubrication jelly to the first 3 inches (8 cm) of the catheter.

**Step 5:** Choose a comfortable position (squatting, sitting on a toilet, standing with one foot on the toilet seat, or lying down with knees bent.)

**Step 6:** Spread the labia using the hand that you will not be holding the catheter with and find the urethral opening. Initially, a mirror can be helpful. With practice, you should be able to find the urethral opening by touch.

**Step 7:** Slowly guide the lubricated catheter into the urethra without touching the part of the catheter that is entering the body.

**Step 8:** Continue to slide the catheter slowly and smoothly until urine begins to flow; this will happen when about 3 inches of the catheter have been inserted.

- If you feel resistance, hold firm, gentle, steady pressure; you can also cough or take a few slow, deep breaths. The muscles should relax, allowing the catheter to pass.
- Relax and let the urine flow from your bladder into the toilet or container.

**Step 9:** When urine stops flowing, slowly and gently remove the catheter. Note that additional urine may drain as you are taking out the catheter.

**Step 10:** With toilet paper or a fresh cleansing cloth, wipe front to back.

**Step 11:** Dispose of the catheter and any packaging.

**Step 12:** Wash your hands with soap and water.



### WHAT TO DO IF YOU ENCOUNTER A PROBLEM:

What You May See or Feel	Why This Might be Happening	What You Should Do
You are trying to push the catheter into your urethra, but it is meeting resistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sometimes the catheter is more difficult to advance just as it approaches the bladder</li><li>• This is normal and can be caused by bladder spasm or tension</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Try to relax</li><li>• Apply gentle, firm pressure until the catheter continues advancing and urine begins to flow.</li><li>• Do not force the catheter</li><li>• Men can try to change the angle of the penis to help the catheter pass smoothly</li></ul>
The catheter is difficult to remove	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• This can be caused by a bladder spasm</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Try to relax</li><li>• Wait 5-10 minutes while relaxing and then try again to remove the catheter</li><li>• Sometimes coughing helps</li><li>• Do not use force</li><li>• If you are having great difficulty and cannot remove the catheter, contact your healthcare provider</li></ul>
You see blood on the catheter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Occasionally, there is a small amount of bleeding if the catheter has irritated your urethra. Usually there is no cause for alarm</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Contact your healthcare provider if the bleeding is heavy, continuous or in the urine</li></ul>
Fever, chills or body aches, especially when accompanied by symptoms of a urinary tract infection: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Severe pain in your lower abdomen</li><li>• Bright red blood or blood clots in your urine</li><li>• Cloudy, dark or strong-smelling urine</li><li>• Gritty material or mucous in your urine</li><li>• Burning sensation</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• These can be signs of a urinary tract infection</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Contact your healthcare provider if you notice any of these symptoms. Prompt diagnosis of any infection is important</li></ul>

#### **DISCLAIMER:**

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