

Intermittent Self- Catheterization Instructions (For Females)

What is a Catheter?

A catheter is a tube used to drain urine from your bladder. You may need a catheter because you have urinary incontinence (leakage), urinary retention (not being able to urinate), or had surgery. Your doctor will give you a prescription for the right catheter for you.

There are many different types and sizes of catheters. You can buy catheters and other supplies at medical supply stores. Other supplies may include towelettes and lubricant, such as K-Y Jelly. **DO NOT use Vaseline (petroleum jelly).**

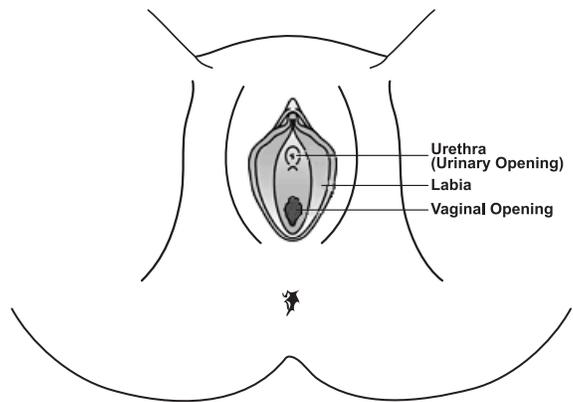
Ask your doctor how often you should empty your bladder with your catheter. Usually, you will need to empty it every 4 to 6 hours or 4 to 6 times a day. Always empty your bladder first thing in the morning and just before you go to bed at night. You may need to empty your bladder more often if you have had more fluids to drink. Avoid letting your bladder get too full. This increases your risk of infection and other problems.

Supplies You Will Need:

- Urinary catheter (they will sometimes come in a kit)
- Cleaning wipes, or towelettes
- Lubricant, such as K-Y Jelly, or surgical lube (**DO NOT use Vaseline.**)
- Disposable gloves (if you prefer or if your doctor tells you to use them)
- Container to collect urine

Using Your Catheter:

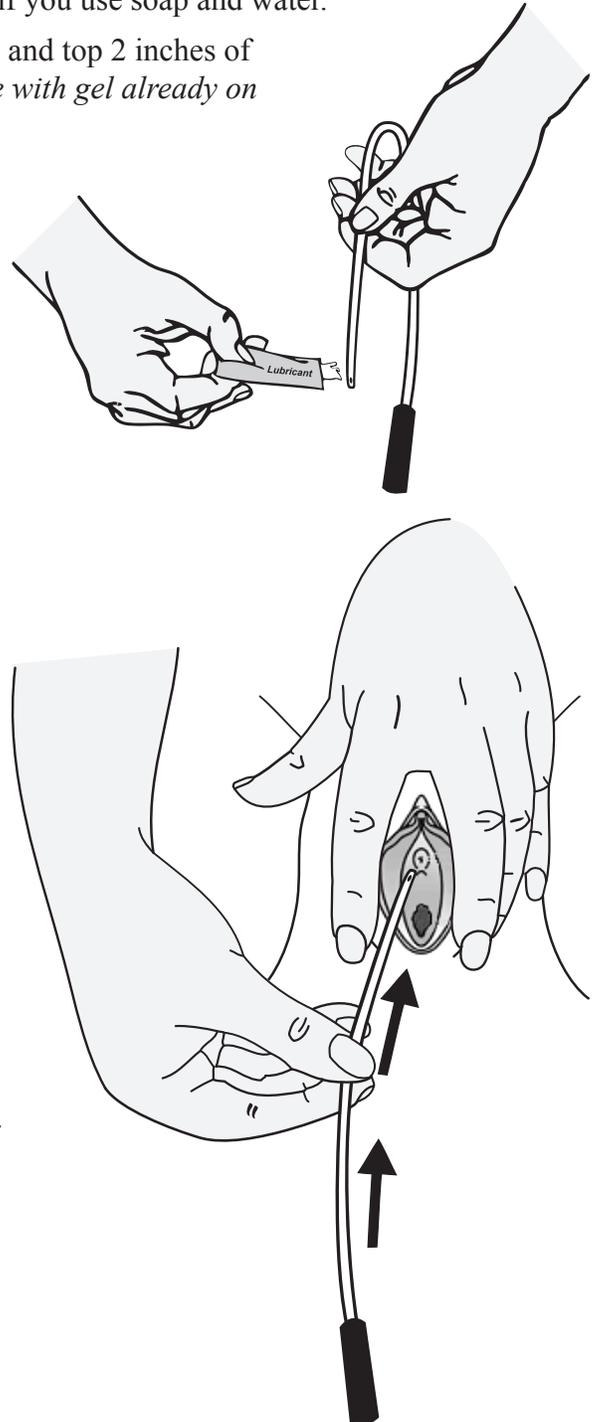
- Wash your hands well with liquid antibacterial soap in a pump dispenser.
- Always wash your hands for 1-2 minutes under running water before touching your catheter.
- Collect your supplies: catheter (open and ready to be used), towelette or other cleaning wipe, lubricant, container to collect urine if you are not planning to sit on the toilet.
- You may use clean disposable gloves if you prefer not to use your bare hands. The gloves do not need to be sterile unless your doctor says so.
- With one hand, gently pull the labia open, and find the urinary opening. You can use a mirror to help you at first.



This information was created and reviewed through a partnership with the UAMS Patient and Family Advisory Councils.

Using Your Catheter, *continued*:

- With your other hand, wash your labia 3 times from front to back, up and down the middle, and on both sides. Use a fresh antiseptic towelette or baby wipe each time. Or you may use cotton balls with mild soap and water. Rinse well and dry if you use soap and water.
- Apply the K-Y Jelly or other gel lubricant to the tip and top 2 inches of the catheter. (*Please note that some catheters come with gel already on them. DO NOT use Vaseline.*)
- While you continue to hold your labia with your first hand, use your other hand to slide the catheter gently up into your urethra until urine starts to flow. Do not force the catheter. Start over if it is not going in well. Try to relax and breathe deeply.
- Let the urine flow into the toilet or container.
- When urine stops flowing, slowly remove the catheter. Pinch the end closed to avoid getting wet.
- Wipe around your urinary opening and labia again with a towelette, baby wipe, or cotton ball.
- If you are using a container to collect urine, empty it into the toilet. Always close the toilet lid before flushing to prevent germs from spreading.
- Wash your hands with soap and water.



When to Call the Doctor

Call your doctor or nurse if you:

- Are having trouble inserting your catheter or have increased discomfort when passing the catheter
- Are leaking urine between catheterizations
- Have a skin rash or sores
- Have back or abdominal discomfort with a fever of 101 degrees or higher
- See these changes in your urine:
 - Change in color or cloudiness
 - Odor to the urine
 - Blood in the urine

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Cleaning Your Catheter:

Most insurance companies will pay for you to use a sterile catheter for each use, and some catheters are meant to be used only once. Many other catheters, however, can be re-used if they are cleaned correctly.

If you are re-using your catheter, you must clean it every day. Always make sure you are in a clean bathroom. ***DO NOT let the catheter touch any of the bathroom surfaces (such as the toilet, wall, or floor).***

Follow these steps to clean your catheter:

- Wash your hands well using warm water with a mild soap.
- Rinse catheter thoroughly with cold water. The catheter does not have to be sterile, just clean.
- When it is dry, store the catheter in a new plastic bag.
- Throw away the catheter when it becomes dry and brittle.

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