

# Taking care of a catheter in the bladder

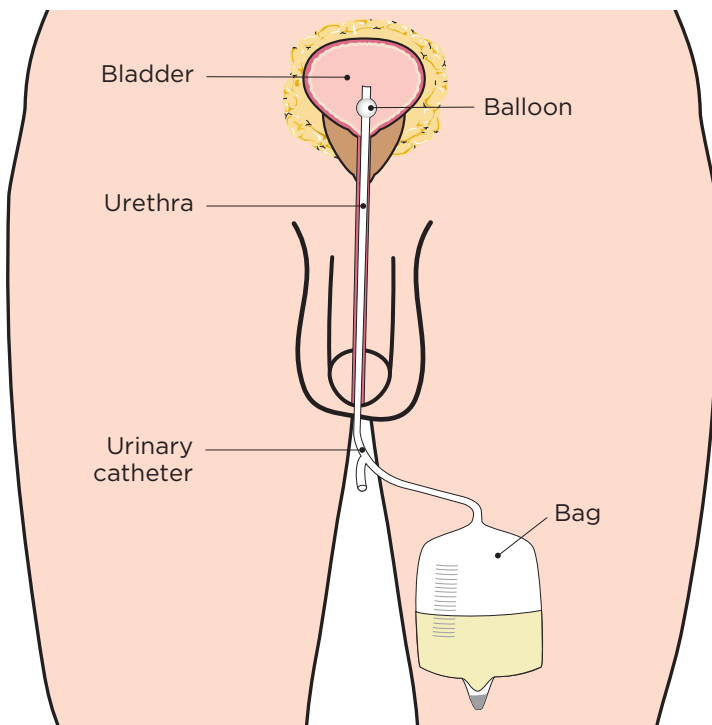


You have just had a catheter inserted in your bladder. This fact sheet explains how to take care of this bladder catheter once you get home.

## What is a bladder catheter?

This is a flexible tube inserted in your bladder. At one end of the catheter, a small balloon is filled with liquid to hold it in place. The other end comes out of the body through the urine outlet channel (urethra) and is connected to a bag. It collects the urine, which flows continuously.

### Bladder catheter in place



## You will have two types of bags:



- **The thigh bag during the day.** Elastic bands hold the bag in place on your thigh. It is hidden under your clothing and allows you to do your daytime activities.



- **The night bag (drainage bag).** Larger, it is hung next to your bed.

## Why do I need a bladder catheter?

Normally urine comes out of the bladder without difficulty. But it may not always be possible to empty your bladder. This could be due to surgery, childbirth, prostate disease, urinary tract infection, etc.

The catheter empties the bladder and prevents pain and damage to the kidneys.

## For how long will I need to have the catheter?

It can stay in place for one to several weeks. The doctor will decide when is the best time to remove it. He or she will give you a follow-up appointment to assess whether it's possible to remove or change it. If you're waiting for surgery, the catheter will remain in place until the operation is done.



### APPOINTMENT

Date: .....

Place: .....

Doctor: .....

## Will it be uncomfortable for me?

After the bladder catheter is inserted, you may feel:

- involuntary bladder contractions (spasms)
- cramps
- an urge to urinate
- leaking around the catheter

This is normal and can last a few days. If this happens often or if it bothers you, call the nurse at your CLSC. Outside CLSC business hours, you can call Info-Santé at **8-1-1**.



**Call also if you have any pain, because the catheter should not cause pain.**

## How do I take care of it?

You will need to:

- **Empty the thigh bag every 3 to 6 hours.** The bag is equipped with an anti-backflow valve. This means you can take a nap without the risk of urine flowing back up the catheter. But don't wait until the bag is too full before emptying it. If the bag is too full, it could become detached or pull on the catheter.
- **Change the type of bag** (thigh bag or night bag) when you get up in the morning and go to bed at night.



## What supplies will I need to look after the catheter?



### Are there any precautions I need to take **BEFORE** doing the care?

Always wash your hands with soap and water before and after handling the bladder catheter and bags, to avoid the risk of getting a urinary tract infection.

### How should I do the care?

The appendix on page 5 describes all the steps you'll need to follow.

### Do I need to take any precautions?

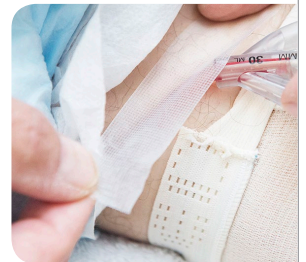
Yes, pay attention to the following points.

- Replace your bags once a week with new ones. To dispose of a used bag: empty it completely, place it in a plastic bag or newspaper and then put it in the garbage. The hospital will give you a spare bag of each type. Then you will have to obtain the necessary supplies yourself.



- When switching from a thigh bag to a night bag, or vice versa, empty the unused bags well. Then clean the tip with alcohol and replace the protective cap.

**Caution: never rinse the bags.**



- Make sure the tube of the night bag is securely attached to your thigh with tape so that it doesn't pull on the catheter and bladder.
- Drink a lot, up to 2 litres a day (or follow your doctor's instructions).
- Only take showers (no baths). Be sure to empty the bag before showering. Wash the catheter and your genitals every morning and evening with soap and water and dry everything thoroughly.

Don't put any talcum powder or cream not prescribed by your doctor in the area around the tube.

## What signs should I watch for?

Here's what you need to be careful about. Call your CLSC nurse, Info-Santé at **8-1-1**, or a member of your care team if you have any of the signs below or if there is no improvement after trying the solutions they propose.

- > You have fever (38°C or higher), chills, or don't feel well.



- > You notice a little blood in the urine. Drink plenty of water, unless it is contraindicated by your health care team.

**If you see blood clots or a lot of blood in your urine (dark red urine), you should go to the emergency room.**

- > You don't see any urine flowing and you start to feel discomfort in your bladder.  
Check to make sure the catheter tube isn't folded and drink water.
- > Urine is flowing around the catheter because of bladder "spasms". Women can wear a pantiliner and men can wrap their genitals in a washcloth. Call if the spasms are too painful or too frequent.
- > You have signs of infection:
  - pain in your abdomen or back
  - sensation of stinging or burning in the bladder
  - cloudy or strong-smelling urine
- > Your bladder catheter falls out or breaks. Don't try to reinsert it. As soon as possible, call the phone number you were given.

## Who can I contact for help or to ask questions?

Your CLSC nurse will give you contact information so you can reach a professional 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Weekdays, from ..... a.m. to ..... p.m.:

Tel. : .....

Evenings and weekends:

Tel. : .....

Clinic at the CHUM:

Tel. : .....

If you can't reach one of these professionals, call **8-1-1**.



### USEFUL RESOURCES

Other health sheets published by the CHUM are available. Ask for those that might fit your situation.



You can also find them on our web site [chumontreal.qc.ca/fiches-sante](http://chumontreal.qc.ca/fiches-sante)



### Questions

|  |
|--|
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |

*The content of this document in no way replaces the recommendations and diagnoses made, or the treatment suggested by your health professional.*

To find out more about the Centre hospitalier de l'Université de Montréal  
[chumontreal.qc.ca](http://chumontreal.qc.ca)




Follow the steps below carefully. They begin when you get up in the morning.

### ATTENTION!

**Reminder:** Wash your hands carefully with soap and water before and after every step.

If you are at risk of falling or have difficulty making precise movements with your hands, you can wear the thigh bag at all times. Some models are larger and come with an extension tube.

### SYMBOLS

|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |
| To do in the morning.   | To do during the day.   | To do before going to bed.  |

1

### EMPTY THE NIGHT BAG



1- Stand over the toilet. Turn the valve to the “open” position. Make sure not to touch the edge of the toilet with the valve tip.



2- When the bag is empty, return the valve to the “close” position. A click tells you that it’s closed.

2

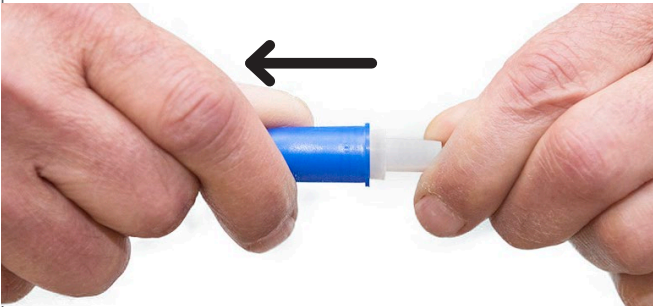
### INSTALL THE THIGH BAG



1- Place the clean pad or towel under the area where the catheter connects to the thigh bag (the junction).



2- Disinfect the junction with an alcohol swab.

**2****INSTALL THE THIGH BAG (CONT.)**

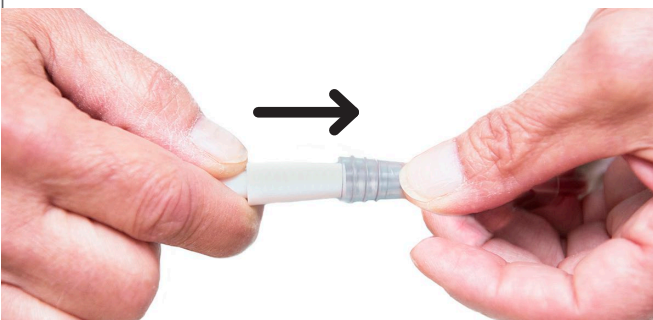
**3-** Remove the protective cap from the tip of the thigh bag tube.



**4-** Disinfect the tip of the thigh bag tube with an alcohol swab.



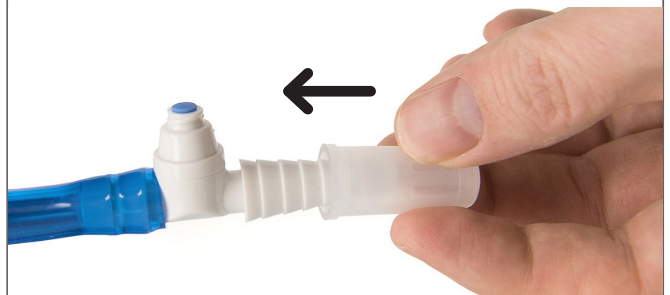
**5-** Carefully disconnect the night bag tubing from the tip of the catheter without pulling on the catheter.



**6-** Connect the thigh bag tube to the catheter opening.

**2****INSTALL THE THIGH BAG (CONT.)**

**7-** Disinfect the tip of the night bag with an alcohol swab.



**8-** Place a protective cap on the night bag.



**9-** Make sure the cap on the tip of the thigh bag is tightly closed.



**10-** Attach the bag to your thigh with the elastic bands.

**3****EMPTY THE THIGH BAG**

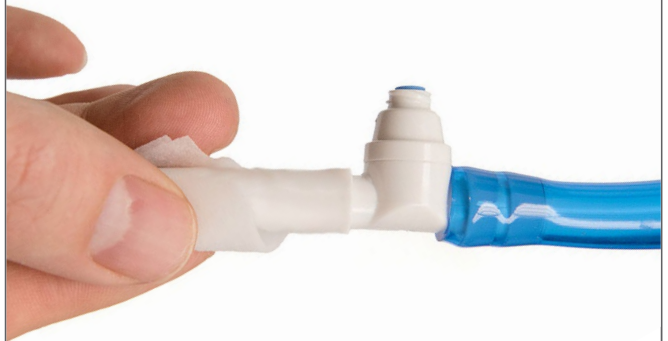
- 1- Stand over the toilet or sit on the toilet seat. Unfasten the elastic band at the bottom of the bag. Remove or unscrew the cap at the bottom of the bag. Empty the urine, making sure you do not touch the edge of the toilet with the tip of the bag.



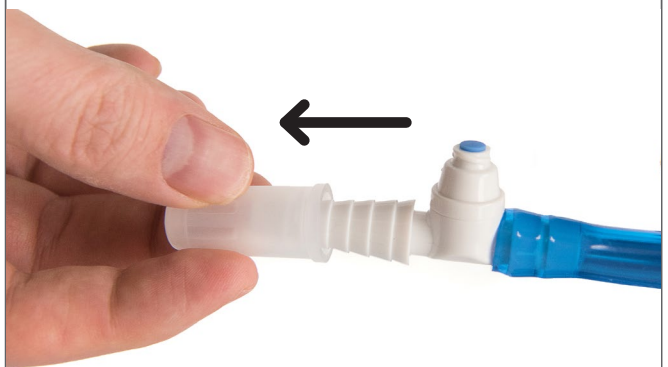
- 2- When the bag is empty, screw the cap back on. Re-attach the bag to your thigh or install the night bag.

**4****INSTALL THE NIGHT BAG**

- 1- Place the clean pad or towel under the junction between the catheter and thigh bag.



- 2- Disinfect the junction with an alcohol swab.



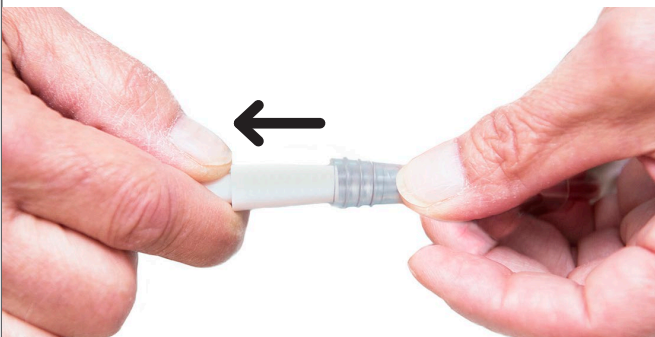
- 3- Remove the protective cap from the tip of the night bag.

4

INSTALL THE NIGHT BAG (CONT.)



4- Disinfect the tip of the tubing with an alcohol swab.



5- Disconnect the thigh bag tubing from the tip of the catheter.



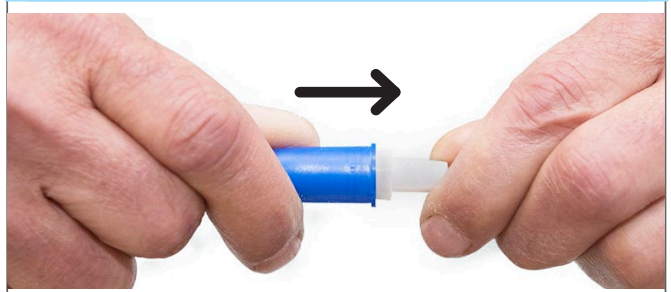
6- Connect the night bag tubing to the catheter opening.



7- Disinfect the tip of the thigh bag with an alcohol swab.

4

INSTALL THE NIGHT BAG (CONT.)



8- Place the protective cap on the thigh bag.



9- Attach the tubing to your thigh with first aid tape.



10- Make sure the clamp on the tube at the bottom of the bag is tightly closed.



11- Hang the bag on the edge of your bed using the hook.

**Important!** The bag should **always** be placed lower than your bladder so the urine does not back up into the catheter.

To find out more about the Centre hospitalier de l'Université de Montréal [chumontreal.qc.ca](http://chumontreal.qc.ca)