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# Urinary Catheters

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## Patient information

### Going home with a urinary catheter after urology surgery



Excellent patient care, together

Following your urology surgery you have been discharged with a urinary catheter in place and this information advises how to care for it and next steps.

### **Why did I have a catheter inserted?**

A catheter is sometimes placed into the bladder during or after urology surgery to:

- Allow your bladder to rest and heal
- Help drain urine if swelling or temporary blockage is expected
- Reduce the risk of urinary retention after surgery.

### **What can I expect with a urinary catheter?**

- Initial discomfort: You may feel pressure or a burning sensation where the catheter is inserted. This usually settles over time.
- Awareness of the tube: It's normal to feel like you need to urinate even with the catheter in place. This feeling often improves with time.
- Bladder spasms: Some people experience cramps or spasms in the bladder, which can cause leakage around the catheter. Medications can help if this becomes uncomfortable.
- Sensation of fullness or urgency: This is common and usually not a sign of a problem unless it's very painful or persistent.
- Blood in the catheter bag and sometimes around the catheter.
- Leakage occasionally can occur around the entrance of the catheter into your body.

### **How does it work?**

- The catheter drains urine continuously into a collection bag (either a leg bag during the day or a larger night bag). You do not have to push or strain, as the urine automatically enters the bag.
- The bag should always be kept below the level of your bladder to allow proper drainage.
- Urine may look bloody or cloudy after surgery — this is usually normal and improves with time. Drinking more fluids can help.

### **Looking after the catheter**

- Keep the area clean: Daily gently wash the area around the catheter with soap and water.
- Avoid pulling or tugging: Always handle the tubing gently to avoid irritation or displacement.
- Empty the bag regularly: Don't let it get too full — empty it usually when it's about two-thirds full.
- Watch for kinks: Ensure the tube isn't bent or blocked, which could stop the flow of urine.

## **When should I contact a doctor?**

If the catheter stops draining and you experience pain in your lower abdomen suggesting that the catheter may be blocked. Sometimes squeezing the tube can clear a small blockage. Heavy blood-stained urine with clots that could block the tube, and if drinking more water doesn't help. If you develop a fever.

## **Can I drive with a urinary catheter?**

A catheter itself does not stop you from driving, however, surgery and anaesthesia often do. Please check with your nurse or doctor in the hospital.

## **Trial Without Catheter (TWOC)**

TWOC is the planned removal of your urinary catheter to check if you can empty your bladder naturally without difficulty. This is an important part of your recovery and helps assess how your bladder is functioning after surgery. You will be asked to attend the hospital for a visit to remove the catheter and monitor how well you pass urine afterward.



You will be given a time and date for this, which will take place in the Ambulatory Care Unit, Shrodells Unit at Watford General Hospital.

## **What happens during TWOC?**

1. Catheter removal: A nurse will gently remove the catheter. You may experience mild discomfort but you will not need anaesthesia.
2. Hydration: You will be asked to drink fluids and wait until you feel the need to pass urine. It is a good idea to keep well hydrated with a catheter and especially just before catheter removal.
3. Bladder scan: After you urinate, a quick and painless bladder scan will check how much urine remains in your bladder. We may wait for you to urinate more than once.
4. Assessment: If you empty your bladder well, catheter will no longer be needed. If not, a catheter may need to be reinserted temporarily.

Sometimes this process can take a few hours, so bring a light snack with you.

## **What are the possible outcomes?**

-  Successful TWOC: You pass urine normally and no further catheter is needed.
-  Unsuccessful TWOC: You may have difficulty urinating or retain urine. A new catheter may be inserted and another TWOC scheduled in a few days.

## **What are the signs of problems I should watch for after TWOC when I return home?**

Contact the hospital or your GP if you experience:

- Inability to pass urine
- Lower abdominal pain or pressure
- Fever or chills
- Signs of infection (burning, cloudy urine, strong odour)

## Can I change my appointment for TWOC?

It is difficult to change the appointment and it is important for you to have the catheter for the specified period of time, however, in an emergency you can contact the Ambulatory care unit at Watford general Hospital to change your appointment on 01923 436772.

If you have any concerns about your follow up, contact the urology secretary on 01727 897147.

## Things to bring on the day of TWOC

- This leaflet
- A list of any medications you take
- Change of underwear
- Something to read or do while you wait
- A snack, as sometimes you have to wait a few hours to pass urine and be assessed.

## How to contact us

Urology

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Hospital switchboard: 01923 244366

Email: [westherts.urology@nhs.net](mailto:westherts.urology@nhs.net)

## PALS

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