

What is a urinary catheter?

A urinary catheter is a thin tube that goes into the bladder to drain urine (pee). Urine drains through the tube into a bag that collects urine. It may be used:

- To measure the amount of urine.
- During and after some types of surgery.
- During some kidney and bladder tests.
- If you are not able to pee (urinate) on your own. This may be due to problems when the bladder holds on to urine. This is called urinary retention. The urine may also be blocked from getting out of the body. This is called urinary obstruction.

What can happen when a catheter is in place?

Patients with urinary catheters have a much higher chance of getting a urinary tract infection (UTI). Germs can enter the urinary tract when the catheter is being put in and while it is in the bladder. Your child will be watched for signs of an infection.

Your health care team will take these steps to prevent infection:

- **A catheter will be used only when needed.**
- Only trained staff will put the catheter in using a sterile procedure. The genital area will be cleaned before the catheter is put in. The area will also be washed with soap and water every day that the catheter is in.
- **It will be removed as soon as possible.** The team will discuss the reason for its use each day during rounds. **Ask the team daily if your child still needs the catheter.**
- Keep the bag and tubing lower than the bladder. This prevents urine from going back into the bladder. **If the bag or tubing is too high, please tell the nurse.**
- The catheter should always be secured to the leg to keep it from being pulled out.

Do not:

- Play with the tubing.
- Tug or pull on the tubing.
- Twist or kink the catheter tubing.
- Everyone touching the catheter needs to clean their hands before and after touching the catheter. Use soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub.
 - If someone does not clean their hands, please ask them to do so.
- Staff will wear gloves to empty the bag at regular times. The drainage spout should not touch the floor.

ALERT: Call your child's doctor, nurse, or clinic if you have any questions or concerns or if your child has special health care needs that were not covered by this information.

This sheet was created to help you care for your child or family member. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment and follow-up.