Caring for Your Suprapubic Catheter
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What is a suprapubic catheter?

This catheter is a tube that drains urine from the bladder. Your doctor or nurse will tell you why you have it and how long you may need it.

The tube enters the body through a small cut in the belly. Stitches will hold the tube in place. You will need to return to the clinic to have the tube removed.

The tube connects to tubing attached to a bag—either a large drainage bag or a smaller leg bag. Urine flows through the tube into this bag. You will empty the bag regularly.

We will teach you how to care for the tube at home. If you have any questions, be sure to ask.

Does it hurt?

You may have cramps (bladder spasms) the first few days you have the tube. We may give you medicine in case of pain.

Basic care

Prevent infections

If germs enter the body, they may cause an infection. Germs can get in:

- Where the tube enters your body
- Where the tube connects to the bag
- Through the drainage spout on the bag.

To reduce the risk of infection, follow all the steps in this booklet carefully.

Always begin by washing your hands for 15 seconds. Don’t touch the spout of the bag with your fingers. Be sure the spout doesn’t touch the toilet.

Clean your skin every other day

To change a bandage or clean the skin around the tube site, see page 3. If you have a bandage, you will need to change it every other day and whenever it gets wet.

Do not use creams, powders or ointments on the skin around the tube.

Do not take a tub bath while you have the tube. You may take a shower.

Secure the tube to your body

Keep the tube taped to your belly at all times. This helps prevent the tube from getting pulled out. To prevent kinks, you may also want to tape it to your upper thigh, leaving a little bit of slack.

Your nurse can show you how to secure the tube. Follow these steps:

1. Place a long piece of tape on your skin. You may want to shave any hair from the area first.

2. Wrap another long piece of tape around the tube. Tape this to the first piece of tape. There should be enough slack in the tube to let you stand and walk comfortably.

3. Change the tape every two to three days, using a different area each time.

You may ask your nurse or pharmacist about other products to help secure the tube (such as cloth or plastic Velcro straps).
Keep your bag and tubing lower than your bladder

Keep your bag and tubing below the bladder at all times. This will prevent urine from flowing back into the bladder.

To drain well, the bag needs to be the lowest part of the system. Any loops of tubing must be higher than the bag.

- When using a leg bag, take the bag off your leg if you lie down. Hang it over the edge of the bed or couch. You may want to use a safety pin to secure the bag. Be careful not to poke the bag or tubing with the pin.

- At night, coil extra loops of tubing on the bed. Use a clip to hold the loops. Hang the bag on the side of the bed (or place it on the floor in a bowl, bucket or clean trash can).

Keep your tubing from getting blocked

Tips:

- Empty the urine from your bag regularly. You may want to empty it when the bag becomes half-full.

- Check the tubing often for kinks that may block the flow of urine.

- Drink plenty of liquids—at least eight extra glasses of water each day (unless your doctor tells you not to).

- If you will have the tube for a long time, it should be changed about every four weeks. Your doctor will tell you how often to have your tube changed. You may need to come back to the clinic, or your home care nurse will change your tube.

- You doctor or nurse may teach you how to flush the tube, if it often gets plugged.
Caring for your tube site

If you have a StayFix bandage or tube stabilizer, we will show you how to use it. Change it once a week or each time it gets wet.

If you have other bandages, change them every other day. Also change them if you have drainage or the bandages get wet.

You must clean the skin around the tube every other day. Follow these steps.

Step 1: Prepare.

1. Clean a table top with a home cleaner, soap and water, alcohol or bleach wipes, and let it air dry.
2. Wash your hands well with soap and water.
3. Place these items on your clean work area:
   • Bag to hold any old bandages
   • Soap that your pharmacist suggests
   • Cotton swab or clean washcloth
   • Sterile 2×2 or 4×4 gauze bandages
   • 1-inch wide paper tape or Medipore tape

Step 2: Remove any bandages and check the skin around the tube.

1. If you have bandages, remove them and put them in the bag for the trash. Be careful not to pull on your tubing or stitches. Do not use scissors—they could cut the tube.
2. Look at the skin around the tube. If you have stitches, check these as well. Call your clinic (or home care nurse) if you see broken stitches or increasing redness, swelling or drainage around the tube site.

Step 3: Clean the skin around the tube.

1. Wash your hands again.
2. Put the soap on your cotton swab or washcloth.
3. Clean the skin around the tube site. (You may do this in the shower.) Start at the tube and move outward about 1 to 2 inches, using a circular motion.
4. Rinse the skin with water. Pat or air dry.

Step 4: Replace the bandages.

When you open the package, you will find two bandages. (You may also use gauze bandages with slits cut into them.)

1. Fold one bandage in half and place it below the tube site.
2. Fold the other bandage in half and place it over the tube site.
3. Tape the bandages in place.

Step 5: Tape the tube to the skin.

Be sure that the tube is securely taped to the skin.

1. Leave a small amount of slack in the tubing. This reduces stress (pulling) on the stitches. It also helps prevent the tube from being pulled out.
2. Tape the tube to the skin about 3 to 4 inches below the site where the tube enters the body.

Step 6: Clean up.

Throw away the bag holding your used materials. Clean your work area with soap, water and paper towel. Wash your hands with soap and water.
Choosing your bag

If you will only use the large bag

Some people prefer to use the large drainage bag night and day. This requires less time and effort—and fewer supplies. It is safer, too: you don’t have to change the bag as often, and this lowers the risk of infection.

- Change the bag once a month or when it leaks.
- You may keep it in a shopping bag with handles during the day. This allows you to move around easily, and it keeps the bag and tubing lower than your bladder.

If you will use a leg bag

Other people prefer to use a leg bag during the day and switch back to the larger bag at night. A leg bag gives you more freedom to move around. You can keep the bag hidden under loose-fitting slacks or a long skirt.

Because it is a smaller bag, you will need to empty it more often. Also, each time you change bags, germs can get into your body.

To set up a new leg bag, follow the steps below. These steps are for the Conveen leg bag. If you use another brand, follow the directions on the package insert.

1. Clean a table top with a home cleaner, soap and water, alcohol or bleach wipes, and let it air dry.
2. Wash your hands well with soap and water.
3. Place these items on your clean work area:
   - Leg bag kit (opened)
   - Clean scissors
   - Alcohol pads
4. Button the leg straps through the top and bottom of the bag. Place the wide strap at the top of the bag. You may trim the straps to fit your lower leg. The bag will hang below your knee.
5. Close the drainage spout at the bottom of the bag.
6. Decide how long the bag’s tubing needs to be. It should reach below the knee. Allow a little slack in the tubing, so you can walk and sit freely. If you decide to shorten the tubing:
   - Use an alcohol pad to clean your scissors well.
   - Use another alcohol pad to wipe the tubing.
   - Cut the tubing to the right size. Do not allow the tip of the tubing to touch anything.
7. Insert the white spout into the bag’s tubing.
   - Keep the gray cover on the large end.
   - Push the small end into the tubing. Once it’s in, it can’t be removed.
Changing bags

1. Wash your hands for 15 seconds. You may then put on clean gloves, if you wish.

2. Place a towel under the tubes to catch any drops of urine.

3. Use an alcohol pad to clean where the current bag connects with the tube. Wipe three times in a row.

4. Gently twist the tubes apart. Don't use your nails. (Nails often carry germs.) Squeeze the tube gently to keep urine from dripping out.

5. Connect the tubing from the new bag to the bladder tube. Do not touch the ends. Check that the tubes connect tightly.

Cleaning your leg bag

Before you can reuse a bag, you must wash it with soap and rinse it with cleaning solution. Clean the bag as soon as you disconnect it from the tube. Do not re-use a bag without cleaning it first. You may use the bag for one week. After that, throw it away.

If you are not using a leg bag, you must change the bag at least once a month. You don't need to clean it—just throw it away.

To clean a bag, follow these steps:

1. Clean your work area with alcohol (or soap and water) and a paper towel. Wash your hands with soap and water.

2. Place these items on your clean work area:
   - Clean funnel
   - Liquid dish soap
   - Cleaning solution (choose one):
     - ¼ cup white vinegar + ¾ cup water, or
     - 15 ml (milliliters) bleach + 150 ml water. (If using bleach, mix a new batch each day.)
   - Clean paper towel
   - Clean towel or storage container

3. Empty the urine from the bag into the toilet.

4. Fill the bag with cool tap water. A small funnel will help direct the stream of water.

5. Drain and fill the bag again, adding a couple drops of dish soap. Gently squeeze the bag several times to clean the inside. Drain the water into the toilet. Rinse the bag well with tap water.

6. Fill the bag with your cleaning solution. Gently squeeze the bag several times.
   - For vinegar and water: Let it sit for 30 minutes.
   - For bleach and water: Let it sit for 30 seconds.
7. Empty the bag into the toilet.

8. Hang to air-dry with both ends pointing down.
   Tips:
   - Pull the sides of the bag apart to speed drying.
   - Do not hang the bag or tubing over a radiator or other source of heat. This may lead to germs and infection.
   - You may wish to use a wire hanger to hang the bag.
   - You may cover the end of the tubing with clean paper towel. Use a rubber band to hold the paper towel in place.

9. After the bag and tubing have dried, store them in a clean towel or covered container. If you used a paper towel, you may remove it.

10. Before you re-use the bag, clean the end of the tubing with an alcohol pad.

When to call for help

If the tube comes out, go to the emergency room. (Tape a bandage over the opening in your skin. Bring the tube with you to the emergency room.)

Call your home care nurse or doctor’s office right away if:

- No urine drains through the tube, or there’s less urine than normal.
- Your urine looks bloody or cloudy, it has changed color, or you see large blood clots.
- Your urine has a bad odor.
- You have pain that gets worse, doesn’t improve or cannot be controlled with medicine.
- You have pain in your back or lower belly area (abdomen).
- You have a fever over 101°F (38.3°C), taken under the tongue.
- Urine leaks around the tube for more than a day or two.
- The skin around your tube is swollen, red, very tender or draining pus.

Do not clamp your tube unless your doctor or nurse asks you to.

Phone numbers

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