Flushing Your Bladder Tube

For Foley or Suprapubic Catheters

Why do I need to flush the tube?

If the tube gets plugged, urine will stop draining into the bag. To remove the plug, you will need to flush the tube with special salt water (sterile saline).

How do I flush the tube?

1. Wash your hands well with soap and water.
2. Gather these supplies:
   - 60 ml syringe with catheter tip
   - Sterile saline (the salt water you received from your doctor)
   - A sterile medical cup (sealed)
   - A clean towel
   - Alcohol pads
   - Cap for the tubing on your drainage bag in a clean, covered container.
3. Unwrap the medical cup. Pour the saline into the cup.
4. Use the syringe to draw up saline from the cup.
   - For children: Draw up 10 ml of saline, unless you are told to use a different amount.
   - For adults: Draw up 30 ml of saline, unless you are told to use a different amount.
5. Place the syringe back in its package to keep it sterile (free from germs). Do not touch the tip of the syringe. Do not let it touch any surface.
6. Place the towel under your tube.
7. Using an alcohol pad, clean the point where the tube connects to the bag’s tubing for 15 seconds.
8. Gently twist the tube apart from the tubing on the bag.
9. Connect the syringe to the tube.
10. Clean the cap with alcohol and place the cap on the end of your bag’s tubing. This keeps the tubing clean and helps prevent infection.
11. Gently push on the plunger of the syringe. This puts the saline into the tube.
   - If it won’t go in, don’t force it. Instead, try to withdraw fluid from the tube. Here’s how:
     a. First, remove the syringe. Put the saline back into the cup.
     b. Re-connect the empty syringe to the tube.
     c. Gently pull on the plunger of the syringe with one hand. Use the other hand to hold the syringe.
     - If you can’t remove fluid (urine) from the tube, try lying on one side, then the other side. If you still can’t remove fluid, call your doctor.
     - If you can withdraw fluid from the tube, empty this into the toilet. Then, try once again to put the saline into the tube.
12. After you flush the tube, use a new alcohol pad to clean where the syringe connects with the tube. Clean for 15 seconds.

13. Remove the cap from the tubing on your bag and store in a clean container with a cover. Clean the tip of the tubing with a new alcohol pad. Do this for 15 seconds.

14. Remove the syringe from the tube.

15. Connect the tube to the drainage bag.

16. Check that urine is draining into the bag. If there is no urine after 15 minutes, flush the tube again. If there is still no urine, call your doctor.

17. Throw away any saline that’s left in the cup.

18. Ask you doctor how long you can keep the sterile saline and how to store it.

**When should I call the doctor?**

Call your doctor if:

- The urine stops draining, even though you have been flushing the tube and drinking lots of fluids.
- You cannot flush or withdraw liquid from the tube.

**Can I re-use a syringe or cup?**

Ask your doctor if you should re-use the syringe and medical cup. You may need to use a new syringe and cup each time you flush. If you are told to use a new medical cup and syringe each time, then throw both away after every use.

If your doctor says you can re-use them, you must wash them first. To wash:

1. Pour water in a bowl, then add dish soap. Set the soapy water aside.
2. Take apart the syringe. Rinse the parts with clear water.
3. Wash the syringe parts, cup and lid in the soapy water.
4. Rinse them again with clear water. Remove all of the soap.
5. Place them on paper towels until dry. Store in a clean covered container.

**Questions?**

If you have any questions, please call your home care nurse or doctor’s office.