

Helpful Tips

Wondering what you should and shouldn't do when living with intermittent catheterization?
Here's our best advice.



Comfort
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Living with the need to perform intermittent catheterization can be difficult at first – not only in dealing with the new physical changes and challenges, but in learning an entirely new way to manage your bladder health. You may have a lot of questions about life with intermittent catheters – **here's some information to help you along the way, so that you can proactively manage your health.**

What type of catheter should I use?

There are three different categories for intermittent catheters. Each catheter fits into a code based on the shape of the tip and if there is the presence of a bag attached to the catheter. Your healthcare professional will help narrow down the type, size and material that will best meet your needs.

Types of intermittent catheters		
Straight tip, with or without coating	Coudé tip, with or without coating	Closed system or sterile kit

Does catheterization hurt?

While you may feel some sensitivity when first learning, catheterizing should not be painful. If you feel pain on a regular basis, ask your healthcare professional for advice and to help you evaluate whether you should try a different catheter size or type.

How often should I catheterize?

This will depend upon your fluid intake and diagnosis leading to the need for intermittent catheterization. Some people may need to catheterize as few as 1-2 times daily, some as many as 5-6. Your healthcare professional will help you to determine your personal schedule.

What should I do if I forget to catheterize?

You should catheterize as soon as you remember, then continue with your regular schedule. If you miss catheterization once or twice, don't worry. However, if it happens often, your risk of developing a urinary tract infection could increase.. Consider setting an alarm, or downloading an app on your phone, to remind yourself in order to stay on schedule.

Do I have to wear gloves to catheterize myself?

Intermittent self-catheterization is generally done as a 'clean' technique, which means gloves do not need to be worn, but hands should be washed and dried thoroughly prior to catheterizing and again once the procedure is complete. Some healthcare providers may recommend catheterization be performed as a sterile procedure with gloves if your immune system is compromised.

Can I use Vaseline® jelly as a lubricant to catheterize myself?

If you are using a catheter that requires you to add lubrication, it is recommended that a water-soluble lubricant such as K-Y Jelly™ be used for catheterization. NEVER use Vaseline as it contains petrolatum which can cause bacteria to attach to the catheter and could cause a urinary tract infection. You do have a choice though. There are catheters that come prelubricated. Ask your Comfort Medical representative for options.

How do I take care of the skin around the urethra?

Normal cleaning is adequate. Use soap and water and make sure you dry the surrounding skin completely.

How long should it take to empty my bladder with a catheter?

The time needed will vary based on the amount of urine in the bladder and the size of the catheter. However, it generally should take less than one minute to empty your bladder.

How do I know if the catheter is inserted correctly?

As soon as the catheter reaches the bladder, urine will start to flow and will continue until the bladder has been emptied.

What should I do if I can't insert the catheter?

First, wait a few minutes and allow your muscles to relax before trying again. Most catheters are pre-lubricated or can be lubricated with a water-soluble lubricant, which may reduce friction. However, you should NEVER use Vaseline or another lubricant without checking with your healthcare professional. If resistance persists, talk to your healthcare professional.

What if the catheter won't come out?

This is not unusual, and generally is due to tension in your muscles. Rest a few minutes and try and relax before trying again – perhaps using deep breathing. Some people find that coughing several times as you begin to remove the catheter helps to release pressure. If relaxation does not work for you, you should contact your healthcare professional.

What do I do if there is blood in my urine?

At times, there might be faint traces of blood on the catheter or slight bleeding after removal. This will usually clear up in a couple of days as your body gets used to this new way to release urine. If bleeding persists, however, you should contact your healthcare professional.

When should I contact my healthcare professional?

If you experience any of these conditions, you should contact your healthcare professional:

- Pain in the area of the urethra or bladder
- Back pain
- Visible blood in the urine
- Cloudy or foul-smelling urine
- New onset or worsening of urinary leakage at the catheter insertion site
- Temperature of 100.5°F or greater
- No urinary drainage from the catheter

UTIs and Catheter Safety

As with any medical process or prescription, occasionally there may be side effects you'll want to address with your healthcare professional.

A few of the more common issues encountered:

- Occasional blood in the urine
- Trauma to the urethral passage
- Symptomatic urinary tract infections
- Formation of scar tissue within the urethra

What are the symptoms of urinary tract infection?

Urinary tract infections (UTIs) are a common complication for catheter users. UTIs occur when bacteria enter a person's bladder or kidneys and catheters provide a particularly convenient pathway for bacteria on the skin to make its way into the body. While almost always treatable, UTIs cause discomfort, necessitate medical attention, and in more extreme cases, may require hospitalization.

While sometimes people with UTIs have no recognizable symptoms, some common signs are:

- A burning or painful sensation with urination or catheterization
- A temperature of 100.5°F or greater
- Persistent blood in the urine
- Resistance or an inability to place the catheter
- New onset or worsening urinary leakage

To be safe, it is recommended that you notify your healthcare professional if you experience any of the above symptoms.

Can catheter-associated UTIs be treated?

Yes, most urinary tract infections associated with catheters can be treated with antibiotics.

How can I protect against catheter-associated UTIs?

There is no guaranteed way to prevent catheter-associated UTIs, however, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) recommends following these simple guidelines to reduce risk:

- Always clean your hands with soap and water or an alcohol free based rub (wipe) before and after touching your catheter
- Do not twist or create kinks in the catheter tubing
- Always keep your urine bag below the level of your bladder
- Use a new, sterile catheter each time you empty your bladder
- Do not pull or tug on the tubing
- Catheterizing on the schedule your clinician recommends for you.

Do not re-use your catheters

The risk of infection via catheter increases when the devices are re-used. Experts agree that single-use catheters provide significantly greater protection against contracting a UTI than repeated use of the same catheter – even when washing the device between uses. Medicare and most private insurance providers may provide coverage for **200 catheters per month**.



The do's and don'ts of catheterizing

Wondering what you should and shouldn't do when changing your catheter? **Here's what you need to know:**

Catheterization instructions for women

Prior to catheterizing, you'll want to have all the necessary equipment at hand: soap and water, a clean towel, your intermittent catheter, a water-soluble lubricant (if not using a pre-lubricated catheter), a container to collect drained urine (or the toilet), and a mirror (optional).

- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water and dry with clean towel
- Open the package containing the catheter, being careful to avoid allowing the catheter to touch a hard surface
- If not using a pre-lubricated catheter, apply a water-soluble lubricant to a few inches of the end of the catheter
- Using your non-dominant hand, spread the labia apart
- Wash the urethral opening with soap and water, wiping front to back
- A mirror may be used to locate the urethral opening
- Gently insert the catheter 2 – 4 inches into the urethra or until urine starts to flow
- Advance the catheter an additional 1/2 to 1 inch to facilitate emptying the bladder of all urine
- Drain the urine into the toilet or into a collection device (this is helpful if instructed to measure the urine output by your healthcare professional)
- Once urine flow stops, slowly remove the catheter stopping intermittently to allow the base of the bladder to empty completely
- Discard the used catheter
- Wipe yourself with tissue from front to back
- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water and dry with a clean towel

Catheterization instructions for men

Prior to catheterizing, you'll want to have all the necessary equipment at hand: soap and water, a clean towel, your intermittent catheter, a water-soluble lubricant (if not using a pre-lubricated catheter), and a container to collect drained urine (or the toilet).

- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water and dry with a clean towel
- Open the package containing the catheter, being careful to avoid allowing the catheter to touch a hard surface
- If not using a pre-lubricated catheter, apply a water-soluble lubricant to a few inches of the end of the catheter
- If you are not circumcised, pull back the foreskin to allow visualization of the urethral opening
- Clean the urethral opening with soap and water in a circular motion, starting with small circles at the urethral opening and move outwards with bigger circles to clean the entire glands of the penis
- Gently insert the catheter into the urethral opening 6 to 8 inches or until urine begins to flow
- Insert the catheter 1/2 to 1 inch further, or until you reach the hub or end of your catheter
- If resistance is met during catheterization, do not force the catheter. Pause and relax while taking slow, deep breaths and use gentle steady pressure to advance the catheter past the urinary valve or sphincter
- Drain the urine into the toilet or into a collection device
- Once urine flow stops, slowly remove the catheter stopping intermittently to allow the base of the bladder to empty completely
- Discard the used catheter
- Clean the urethral opening with a tissue
- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water and dry hands with a clean towel

Managing your diet & nutrition

As the old saying goes: “an apple a day keeps the doctor away”. Eating right and drinking well is good for your bladder – and for your overall well-being.

Here’s what you need to know:

How to increase the intake of healthy food

Make half your plate fruits and vegetables. Consider including several colors on your plate: red, orange, light green and dark green.

How to reduce the intake of unhealthy foods

Make cakes, cookies, ice cream, pizza and burgers occasional choices – not everyday foods. Drink water instead of sugary drinks. Eat less salt, which can raise blood pressure. Compare products and buy those with less salt. Add spices and herbs instead.

How much fluid should I be drinking?

It is recommended that you drink 6-8 glasses of fluid daily.



Vicki
Catheter user

How to stay active

Wondering whether you can live an active lifestyle with a catheter? Absolutely, you can. Some physical activities can cause you to leak more or make you feel the urge to go more often. Therefore, you might feel that it’s safer to simply avoid sports and other physical activities. **But the fear of increased bladder issues should not hold you back from exercising – quite the contrary.**

3 tips – making exercise a success

Ready, steady, go! Some tips to make it easier to be active:

Stick to your schedule

It’s easy to get carried away when you’re involved in sports activities – especially when you’re about to win or in good company! Set yourself a reminder so you don’t forget to catheterize. Think about where you’ll be doing your activity and plan when you can visit the bathroom, so it doesn’t get in the way.

Catheterize before the activity

Whatever you decide to do, catheterize right before you begin to help minimize the risk of leakage.

Remember to drink

Bladder issues and the insecurity of not being at home might persuade you to drink less. But if you sweat more or the weather is hot, you will need to drink even more to replace lost fluids. Take small sips and plan your catheterizations.

Intimacy

It's natural to have concerns about sex and intimacy – rest assured that this is normal. But intimate encounters can still be part of your and your partner's lives.

Intermittent catheterization rarely interferes with sexual activity, but here are a few tips. Women are more likely to get urinary tract infections and sexual activity can increase the risk because of the female anatomy, but men can also get them – so this advice is relevant for both:

Precautions when you have sex

During intercourse your genital area will always be introduced to bacteria – either from yourself or from your partner. Follow these rules before, during and after sex to limit the amount of bacteria:

Before sex:

Make sure to catheterize yourself and empty your bladder completely before having sex to prevent leakage. It can also be a good idea to wash your genital area or shower to wash away bacteria.

During sex:

If you or your partner feel dry during intercourse use a water-soluble gel (lubricant) to help decrease friction and stress on tissue, which can lead to infection. The use of diaphragms and spermicides can also cause irritation, which promote infections. If you have frequent UTIs talk to your healthcare professional about another form of birth control.

After sex:

Empty your bladder immediately after having sex, even though there is only a small amount of urine in your bladder, this will help flush potential bacteria out. Drink 2-3 glasses of water and urinate when you have the urge to do so. The goal is to have a good steady stream of urine to wash any bacteria from the bladder.



Arita and Zion
Catheter users

Traveling with your catheters

Planning on hitting the road? Being away from home doesn't have to be overwhelming. With proper preparation, you can find the peace of mind to relax and enjoy your trip.

Pack smart and plan ahead

When you're away from home, it's a good idea to make sure you have a little extra of everything – just in case. Consider the different environments you will encounter during your travels. Whether you enjoy nature, power shopping or delving into fine arts at a museum, make sure you bring enough of your supplies and accessories to suit each situation.

Long journey? Prepare for it

Long travels can be a challenge. If you will not have access to bathrooms during the journey, consider a catheter and bag solution. If it's impossible for you to catheterize during the journey at all, talk to your healthcare professional about another solution (could be a short-term indwelling catheter). Always try any alternative solutions out at home first, so you can get comfortable with the new product.

Research before you go

While you're researching top restaurants or must-do attractions, take some time to locate the nearest medical facility in case you need supplies, medication or accessories. It may also be useful to research whom to contact at your destination, should any catheter issues occur. If you're going away for a long time, find the contact information for a catheter supplier where you'll be staying – and be sure to take your prescription along with you.

Will I have problems going through security?

Some products contain fluid – ask your healthcare professional to write a note on what products you use or download a travel certificate so you can bring products in your hand luggage. This also goes for other lubricants or hand sanitizer gels you might need. Present the product information to the security staff.

What if I need to catheterize during the journey?

Make sure to catheterize as close to boarding as possible, which might be at the airport. On long distance flights you might need to catheterize on the plane. If possible request an aisle seat close to the toilet.

What do I need to pack?

Take an adequate number of supplies and accessories with you. Remember to order them in enough time before your travels. Place supplies in both your check-in baggage and in your carry-on luggage, in case you are changing planes or your luggage gets delayed or lost.

How do I stick to my schedule?

Your catheter schedule will probably not match the schedule of your air travel. A time difference during flight also puts a challenge to your daily routine. If you have doubts about remembering when it's time, set an alarm on your watch or phone.



Randal
Catheter user

If you want to know more about Comfort Medical and what it's like for others, like you, who use intermittent catheters, please visit our blog at:

www.comfortmedical.com/blog

Need help?

We will always call you when it's time to reorder your catheters. You can always reach us if you have any questions about your product or delivery at:



1-800-700-4246

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