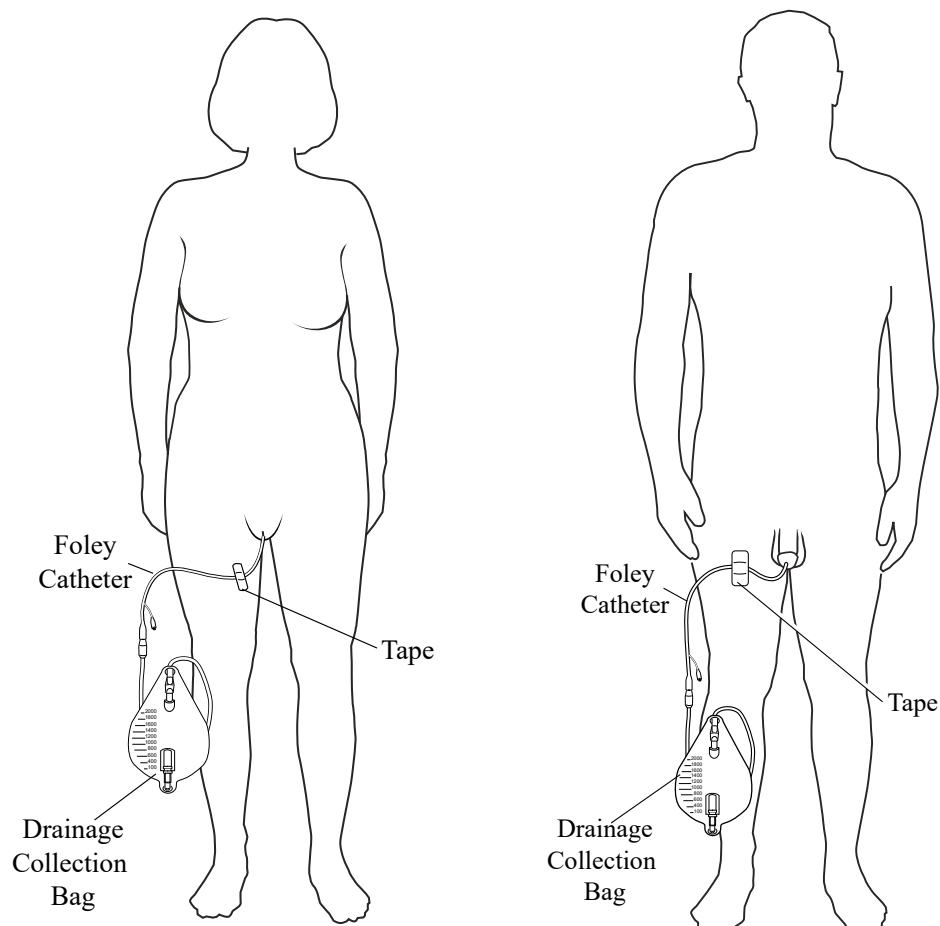


Preventing Infections During Urinary (Foley) Catheter Use

A urinary catheter is a long, thin, flexible tube put into your urethra and goes into your bladder to drain urine. It may also be called a Foley or an indwelling catheter.

This tube has a small balloon at the end filled with water. The balloon keeps the catheter in place inside your bladder. The catheter is connected to tubing that drains urine into a collection bag outside your body.



A urinary catheter may be used if:

- You are unable to empty your bladder on your own (urinary retention).
- You need help passing urine after certain surgeries, injuries, or medical conditions.
- Your healthcare team needs to closely measure how much urine your body is making.
- You are having specific tests or procedures involving your kidneys or bladder.

A urinary catheter is only used when needed and is removed as soon as possible. Your healthcare provider will talk to you about why you need to have a urinary catheter and how long it may need to stay in place.

How to prevent infection

If you have a catheter in place, you have an increased risk of getting a urinary tract infection, also called a UTI. To decrease your risk of infection, special care will be taken before your catheter is put in and while your catheter is in place. When you are in the hospital, a member of your healthcare team will help care for and clean your catheter each day.

To decrease your risk of infection:

- Wash your hands with soap and warm water before and after you touch your catheter. If soap and water are not available, use alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Ask all caregivers to wash their hands before and after they touch your catheter. Alcohol-based hand sanitizer may be used if soap and water are not available.
- Keep the area where the catheter leaves your body clean. Your nursing care team should help you wash or clean this area at least daily with special soap.
- If you have stool incontinence, you may need a partial bath or thorough cleaning with wipes to help reduce infection risk. Ask your healthcare team for assistance.
- **Do NOT pull or tug** on the catheter tubing. Use your leg strap or securement clip to secure the tubing to your leg to prevent pulling the catheter.
- Keep your catheter and tubing free of twists or kinks. **Do NOT** lay on your catheter. Make sure urine can flow through the tube and into your collection bag.
- Keep the collection bag lower than the level of your hips to prevent urine from flowing back into your bladder. **Do NOT** put the collection bag beside you in bed and keep the bag off the floor.
- Empty the collection bag at least every 8 hours or when it is over halfway full. **Do NOT** let the drain spout that is on the bag touch anything while you empty the urine.
- After you empty the urine from your bag, clean the tip of the tube with an alcohol wipe and re-clamp the tube. Return the tip of the tube to the pocket holder on the bag.
- Only disconnect your catheter from the drain tube when you change collection bags.
- **Do NOT take a bath.** Your healthcare provider will tell you when it is okay to shower.
- Unless told otherwise, drink 8 to 10 cups of water or other caffeine-free fluids each day.

If you go home with a catheter, your nurse will teach you and your caregivers how to care for your catheter at home to prevent infection.

When to call your provider

Call your provider right away if you have signs of a urinary tract infection (UTI). Signs of a UTI can include:

- Burning or pain in your lower abdomen or back
- Chills or a temperature of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit (38 degrees Celsius) or higher
- Urine that looks bloody, dark golden, or cloudy
- Pain or aching in your back, around the area of your kidneys
- Pain, redness, swelling, or drainage where the catheter leaves your body
- Nausea or vomiting
- If you become confused or have changes in how you are acting. This is most common when you are older.

Treatment for a UTI

If you have a UTI, your provider may order medicine (antibiotics) to treat the infection. Your provider may place a new urinary catheter.

Talk to any member of your healthcare team if you have more questions about your catheter or your care. For more information about how to care for your catheter, ask for these handouts:

- “Home Care for Your Foley Catheter (Female Anatomy)” or visit go.osu.edu/pted975
- “Home Care for Your Foley Catheter (Male Anatomy)” or visit go.osu.edu/pted4261

This resource is for informational purposes only. Talk to your healthcare provider if you have any questions about your care. For more education, contact the Library for Health Information at 614-293-3707 or health-info@osu.edu.