

# A guide to ISC

## (intermittent catheterisation)

### What is ISC?

Catheterisation is passing a small tube through the urethra into the bladder to help empty urine.

The main reason for using catheters is for urinary retention, if you do not empty your bladder this can cause over stretching of the bladder which can cause damage to the bladder muscle, which then can cause damage to the kidneys. Retention can cause increased frequency and at times incontinence.

Failure to empty the bladder effectively can cause urinary tract infections.

Catheters come in 3 different forms indwelling (or urethral) a tube that is inserted into your urethra this can stay in short or long term dependant on the clinical need.

Supra pubic is a surgically created hole into your bladder and the catheter is inserted directly into the bladder.

Intermittent self-catheterisation is a way of emptying your bladder. A small tube is inserted into your bladder through the urethra by yourself, carer, or family member. It helps to remove urine that you are unable to void yourself.

It is a more flexible alternative to a long term catheter also known as an indwelling. It provides more control over your bladder and is more discreet.

Catheters are single use only, and can be thrown away once used.

ISC can reduce voiding frequency and incontinence and allows more control over your bladder. ISC will help with incomplete emptying.

The duration for the need to catheterise is dependent on the reason for catheterising. The nurse will discuss the length of time with you at the appointment.

Before commencing self-catheterisation you need to understand your anatomy and where the urethra is located, some patient use a mirror to help locate the urethral opening.

Learning to catheterise is a new skill and will take time to acquire, with practice this can take only a few minutes and can easily be managed into everyday life.

## What do I need?

- Soap and water to wash hands.
- Catheter.
- Lubricant - most catheters are well lubricated but some patients need additional lubricants, this can be discussed at the clinic appointment and on review.
- Toilet and or jug to empty the urine into, if your catheter doesn't have a bag attached.
- Some women like to use a mirror to help finding the urethra.

## How do I do it?

- Some patients who have an aspect of bladder function will need to void naturally before they use the catheter.
- Wash hands with soap and water and dry them. Do not touch anything after you have washed your hands.
- If you can urinate naturally before always try.
- Find a comfortable position, sitting on the edge of the bath, toilet or on the bed.
- If you are female you may need to use a mirror to find the urethra.
- Clean the area with water, males will need to pull the foreskin back. Open the catheter just before you are going to use it, to prevent the lubricant from drying and to reduce infection.
- Insert the catheter into the urethra until urine starts to flow, once this has stopped withdraw the catheter slowly as more urine may start to flow. For male patients you will need to hold your penis upwards to ensure the urethra is straight.
- Dispose of the catheter once you have finished in normal household waste. Never flush the catheters down the toilet. They do not need to go into clinical waste.
- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water. If you do not have access to soap and water, hand gel or wipes designed for intimate use can be used.

## What to look out for?

Blood in the urine is also common, if this is persistent or doesn't stop please seek urgent medical help.

You may notice a small amount of blood on the catheter this is normal, there may be an element of urethral tissue damage. This will heal as your body gets used to using the catheters.

Urine infections are common; the catheter provides a direct route for bacteria to enter to the bladder.

## Signs and symptoms of an infection are

- Feeling unwell
- Tired or loss of appetite
- Fever, chills and shivering
- Pain or burning when passing urine or passing the catheter
- Cloudy or offensive smelling urine
- Increased frequency
- Blood in the urine

Contact your GP or 111 for advice, if you feel you have an infection. You will still need to continue ISC if you develop an infection; it is common to develop one at the start of using ISC.

If you have tried to pass the catheter but can't, relax and try again some time later. Never use force or rush when trying to insert the catheter. If you feel resistance stop, take a few deep breaths or gently cough deep. This can help the muscles relax and the catheter should glide in easily. If this is persistent please contact the service, GP or seek out of hours care.

If you haven't passed any urine for 8 hours and are unable to pass a catheter contact your DN team or attend A&E, you could need a temporary indwelling catheter.

## Other information

- ISC will not affect your sex life
- Your GP will prescribe the catheters for you and most patients are set up with the home delivery company (DAC) to deliver the products to your home, most have a service that will contact you to check you are managing well with ISC.
- Establishing a routine is essential it may be necessary to empty your bladder every 4-6 times per day. Though it is advised to follow the individual plan the nurse has set for you.
- Choose a convenient time for you to use your catheter, for example around coffee breaks or meals times, this will help to establish a routine.
- Leave reserve catheters at places that you usually visit, such as work, friends or families homes and in the car. Ensuring they do not get too hot or cold as the extreme temperatures can impact on the catheter. Remember to take enough in your hand luggage and allow for delays.
- Catheters can be taken on a plane and you can obtain a letter from the company to say you are traveling with a medical device. Your GP can also provide this letter for you.
- If you can't remove the catheter try and relax and wait a few minutes before trying again, if you are unable to remove attend A&E.
- Constipation can impact on emptying your bladder, ensure you are emptying your bowel every 3 days and your stools are soft and easy to pass.

**If you have any comments about this leaflet or the service you have received you can contact :**

Calderdale Bladder & Bladder Service  
Beechwood Community Health Centre  
60B Keighley Road  
Halifax HX2 8AL

Telephone: 01422 252086

[www.cht.nhs.uk](http://www.cht.nhs.uk)

**If you would like this information in another format or language contact the above.**

Potřebujete-li tyto informace v jiném formátu nebo jazyce, obraťte se prosím na výše uvedené oddělení

Jeżeli są Państwo zainteresowani otrzymaniem tych informacji w innym formacie lub wersji językowej, prosimy skontaktować się z nami, korzystając z ww. danych kontaktowych

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ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਉਪਰੋਕਤ ਵਿਭਾਗ ਵਿੱਚ ਸਾਡੇ ਨਾਲ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੋ।

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برائے مہربانی مندرجہ بالا شعبے میں ہم سے رابطہ کریں۔

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