

National Association for Continence (NAFC) is a non-profit organization dedicated to improving the quality of life of people with incontinence. NAFC is a leading source of education, advocacy, and support to the public and to the health profession about the causes, prevention, diagnosis, treatments, and management alternatives for incontinence.

Always consult your doctor before trying anything recommended in this or any other publication that speaks to general health issues.



## Male External Catheters:

### Important Tips For Men



Promoting Quality  
Continence Care through

## Consumer Education

A publication by  
**National Association For Continence**  
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## Male External Catheters: Important Tips For Men



*by Katherine F.  
Jeter, EdD*

If you have been told that the best solution for your incontinence is a male external (condom) catheter or you are planning to try this management system, this information will help you wear the device more comfortably and get the most wearing time from it. Not all condom catheters are the same, so you may need to try several types before finding the one that suits you the best.

### What Do I Need to Know to Get Started?

Originally condom catheters were just that – a condom with the end cut off, so it could be attached to a drainage tube and collecting bag away from the body. Now these devices are very carefully made. They come in several sizes, with and without adhesive, and with other special features. Here are basic tips to get you started right.

NAFC advises that you see a nurse specialist who is experienced in sizing and teaching men to use condom catheters.

- Buy the right size. All companies have a measuring guide to help you select the size that is best for you.

- Clip hair on your penis and any pubic hair that might get caught as the condom catheter is rolled to the base of the penis.
- Wash your penis and blot dry. The skin must be dry and warm. If you have just taken a hot shower and your bathroom is steamy, you will need to wait or move to a room where the air is not so moist.
- Apply a polymer skin sealant. There are numerous brands by Bard, Hollister, Mentor, Urocare Products, Inc., The Perma-Type Company, LDB Medical Inc., etc. Allow the sealant to dry until it is slick and smooth. There are two purposes for this skin sealant. It will protect your skin from perspiration and urine moisture; and, when you remove the condom catheter, the layer of skin sealant – not the external layer of your skin – will be removed.
- Hold your penis and place the rolled condom catheter over it. Leave enough space at the end of the condom catheter so the head of your penis does not rub against the inside of it. Most uncircumcised men leave their foreskin in place, over the head of the penis. Serious swelling of the foreskin, called “phimosis” [fy-MOE-sis], may result if the foreskin of the uncircumcised man is not kept over the head of the penis.
- Unroll the adhesive-coated sheath slowly, pressing the condom against your skin. When the condom is completely unrolled, grip your penis all around for 10-15 seconds to be sure that any wrinkles in the condom are sealed together and to eliminate any air bubbles. If there are many wrinkles in the sheath, then the condom catheter is probably too large.

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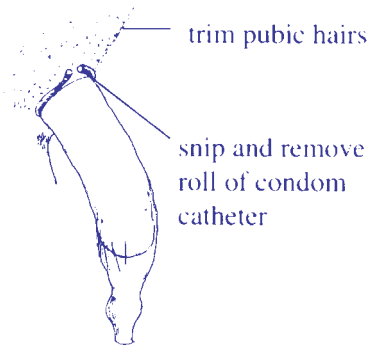
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- Sometimes the condom catheter does not fully unroll, and a roll of the condom will remain at the base of the penis. You should carefully snip the remaining roll in several places or remove it completely to ensure that the roll will not cause pressure sores at the base of the penis or cause the condom catheter to come off.



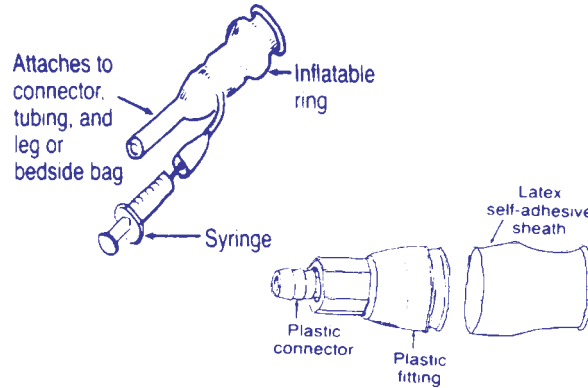
New non-latex condom catheters are available for men who may have a latex allergy. This is particularly important for people with spina bifida. Another advantage of the non-latex condom catheters is the clear material from which they are made. This allows you to see through it to check for proper placement when you are putting it on and to keep tabs on the condition of your skin while you are wearing it.

There are a variety of condom catheters without adhesive. If you are going to wear a condom catheter during the day, but not at night, you probably should consider one without adhesive.

If you have recently had prostate surgery and you urinate regularly but still have some leakage in between, **OR** you do intermittent catheterization and you still have leakage in between, you should consider either a reusable condom catheter that is held in place with an inflatable ring or the self-adhesive condom catheter that has a removable tip. They can be easily removed and replaced each time you urinate or catheterize.

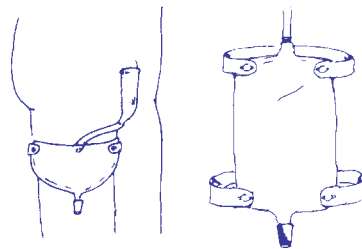
## What Other Supplies Do I Need?

- You will need an extension tube to connect the end of the condom catheter to a leg bag or bedside bag. Talk to the surgical supplier where you are buying your condom catheters.



You may want to wear your leg bag around your thigh or down around your ankle. This will depend on your activities and lifestyle and whether you want to wear shorts. The tubing can be cut to any length.

- Leg bags come in different sizes and are made of different materials. They come in horizontal and vertical styles. A horizontal leg bag can be worn around your upper thigh and is easily concealed under shorts.
- Most leg bags come with latex straps. When the leg bag fills, these straps sometimes pull hair and may actually restrict circulation. Soft, elastic straps with Velcro® closures or knitted “holsters” or leg bag holders may be safer and more comfortable.



- A larger bedside bag for use when sleeping or during long rest periods will ensure that the smaller leg bag will not get too full. A bedside bag with a removable top will allow you to empty the contents and easily clean with water and cleansers.

You may use commercially-available cleansers and de-crystallizers or you may mix 1 part white vinegar with 4 parts water and use this solution to clean leg bag and bedside drainage bags. If you are using a vinegar water solution, be sure to rinse with cold water afterwards, so you don't smell like a salad bowl. Allow leg bags or containers to air dry with caps off.

## How Long Can I Wear A Condom Catheter?

Wearing time will vary, but you should expect to wear one condom catheter for at least 24 hours and up to 72 hours. In hot and humid weather, or when you have been “working up a sweat,” or taking extra showers, you will have to change more often. Follow your health professional's directions.

## How Expensive Are These Devices?

The cost will depend on the condom catheter you select, how long you wear each one, and how often you choose to replace the leg bags and/or bedside container. Because they are devices, they are covered by Medicare Part B. Be sure you have a prescription from your doctor for the condom catheter, bedside container, leg bags, leg bag straps, tubing, and skin sealant. Your pharmacist or supplier will have the details on the amount of reimbursement you can expect. Save all your receipts to submit for reimbursement.

## For Further Information

The following items are available through NAFC. To order, you may send a check to NAFC, P.O. Box 1019, Charleston, SC 29402 or call 1-800-BLADDER to order with a MasterCard or Visa:

- With your **NAFC Consumer Subscription**, you will receive our quarterly newsletter, *Quality Care*®. Every issue includes helpful information about causes and treatments for incontinence. Also included is either the *Resource Guide*®: *Products and Services for Incontinence*, a complete directory of incontinence products and services; or *Discoveries*® – an updated directory of incontinence products and services to supplement the Resource Guide; access to our *Continence Resource Service* database of healthcare professionals; free NAFC educational leaflets; and a copy of *Your Personal Guide for Bladder Health*, a 48-page booklet covering a wide variety of topics, including diet and daily habits, pelvic muscle exercises, access to the Members Only section of the Web site, www.nafc.org, and more. (\$25 annually).
- **Male Pelvic Muscle Exercises Audio Cassette and Training Manual** — this audio cassette is most helpful for men experiencing urine leakage after prostate surgery. The accompanying training manual helps you to follow the verbal instructions with written descriptions and detailed drawings. (\$6 postpaid).
- **Incontinence: What Every Man Should Know** — This educational leaflet, specifically for men, gives an overview of the types of incontinence and treatment options. (free)