

Female Self-Catheterization

by Rodney A. Appel, MD,FACS,
Baylor College of Medicine,
Houston, TX

Self-catheterization is a safe procedure that can help bring your urinary symptoms under control. Many people self-catheterize and report that it has improved their quality of life. It will allow you to keep your bladder healthy, completely empty your bladder at regular intervals, protect your kidneys from infection, and eliminate the need for wearing a continuously draining catheter.

This is a simple procedure that requires no special soaps or special cleansing agents. A "clean" technique is sufficient. Liquid dish soap or liquid hand soap is adequate.

Catheterization Procedure:

1. Gather equipment needed:
 - a. Mirror (to locate the opening of the bladder).
 - b. Soap.
 - c. A water soluble lubricant, such as KY Jelly. Don't use Vaseline because it will destroy the catheter and can also cause a bladder infection.
 - d. Clean rubber or plastic catheter in its container (clean small jar or plastic bag).
 - e. Clean towel.
2. Arrange your clothing so it is not in the way.

3. Attempt to urinate on your own. You should still catheterize even if you are able to urinate a large amount. There may still be a volume of urine in the bladder that must be emptied to prevent infection.

4. Wash your hands with regular bath soap and water. Wash your perineal area (from front to back) with bath soap and water, then dry.

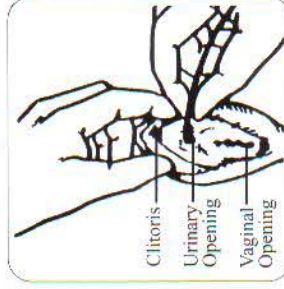
5. Wash the catheter with soap and water and rinse well. Place the catheter on a clean cloth or on a paper towel.

6. Open lubricant tube and apply a generous amount of lubricant to the first few inches of the catheter. Lubricant can be purchased at most drugstores. The lubricant must be water-soluble — **DO NOT USE VASELINE!** Bacteria can stick to Vaseline and cause a urinary tract infection.

7. Sit on toilet, or a firm surface, lean back somewhat, and spread legs apart.

8. Using the hand you will not be using to hold the catheter, spread your vaginal lips (labia) apart, both outer and inner parts.

9. Identify your clitoris, urinary opening, and vaginal opening using a mirror or by feeling the area.



10. Pick up the lubricated catheter with the other hand. Hold it like a pencil about 1/2" from its tip, and insert the tip straight (or upward) into the urinary opening, allowing the other end to hang down between your legs into a basin or the toilet.

11. Gently thread the catheter 3"-4" into the bladder until you see urine flow into the basin or toilet.

Then gently thread it another 1/2"-1" into the bladder. **Note:** If the catheter enters the vagina, withdraw the catheter, wash it with soap and water, dry it, and start again.

12. Hold the catheter in place and allow urine to continue draining into a basin or toilet until it stops completely.

13. Gently remove the catheter from the bladder. Wipe yourself with tissue from front to back.

14. Dress yourself and clean the catheter.

15. If your doctor requests it, write down the amount of urine obtained with catheterization.

Catheter Care

To clean the catheter after use:

- Flush catheter through with warm soap water in the sink.
- Rinse catheter well with plain water and drain.
- Dry catheter with clean cloth or paper towel.
- Store in small clean jar or small clean plastic bag.

You do not have to sterilize your catheters — cleaning them as described above is adequate.

One catheter will usually last one month or longer. If needed, buy two or three catheters at a time in the size prescribed by your doctor or nurse. Urinary catheters can be purchased in most drug stores or medical supply houses. You should discard and buy new catheters when the rubber becomes faded, cracked, and/or pieces of the rubber break off.

Trouble-Shooting:

If you meet resistance during the first two weeks of catheterization don't be discouraged. With time, this

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discomfort lessens as the urinary tube (the urethra) “toughens up.” If you find it too painful to catheterize, please call your health care professional.

Catheters can be purchased at medical supply stores. Bring the original catheter wrapper to the store with you. Allow time for the store to order catheters that are not in stock.

It is very important that you follow the fluid guidelines suggested by your health professional. If you are to limit your fluids, your total liquids for twenty-four hours are usually limited to a total of one quart and one pint (1,000cc to 1,500cc).



NAFC's *Resource guide Products and Service for Incontinence* offers current product information for self-catheterization. The *Resource Guide* is complimentary with membership in the National Association For Continence. For more information on joining NAFC (\$25 annually), please call us at 1-800-BLADDER.

Warning Signs:

Call your health care professional immediately if any of the following occur:

- If you cannot catheterize due to pain or inability to get the catheter in.
- If you have a fever above 100 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Back pain in the area of your kidneys.
- If you experience a sudden onset of leakage of urine between catheterization.
- If the urine becomes cloudy or foul-smelling.
- If your urine becomes very bloody (like the color of cranberry juice).

National Association For Continence is a non-profit organization dedicated to improving the quality of life of people with incontinence. NAFC is a leading source of public education, and advocacy 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.

For more information about incontinence, write or call:

NAFC

P.O. Box 8310

Spartanburg, SC 29305-8310

phone: 864-579-7900

fax: 864-579-7902

toll-free: 800-BLADDER (800-252-3337)

Web site: www.nafc.org

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Important Tips for Women