

***Danbury Hospital Patient Education Sheet*****How do I Care for My External Urinary Catheter?****What is an external urinary catheter?**

An external urinary catheter is a soft sheath or sleeve that fits over the penis or directly attaches to the glans penis. External catheters are applied with:

- An adhesive that is inside the sheath, or
- An adhesive that is applied to the penis before application, or
- A strap that is applied over the sheath after catheter application.

The catheter is attached to a urinary drainage bag, which collects the urine. This system is used to prevent wetness caused by short-term (temporary) or long-term (chronic) urinary incontinence. The catheter should be secure, leak free, comfortable, and easy to apply and to remove.

**How do I choose the type of catheter?**

Users should make selections based on their needs (type and pattern of incontinence), ability to use (dexterity), anatomy, and family or caregiver support. There are many types of external catheters, each with different materials and features. The catheter

manufacturers have specific guidelines for sizing and application. A thorough assessment with education by a clinician is essential.

**How do I apply the catheter?**

- ✓ Wash the penis with plain soap and water and dry thoroughly
- ✓ Check that any adhesive or barrier cream is removed
- ✓ Apply a skin protectant and allow to dry (if manufacturer allows)
- ✓ Leave foreskin in natural position (down over head of penis)
- ✓ Avoid creams and ointments
- ✓ Trim long pubic hair using scissors or supplied hair guard

**How do I remove the catheter?**

- ✓ Wear time is recommended by the manufacturer
- ✓ Removal may be made easier after soaking the penis with a warm cloth for 30 seconds
- ✓ Wear time is usually 12 to 72 hours

## What are some care tips?

- Check skin with each removal and know what symptoms to report:
  - Redness or swelling of penis, glans or scrotum;
  - Any open skin on penis or scrotum;
  - Fever, cloudy urine, urine with foul odor, feeling ill, flank pain.
- Maintain an adequate fluid intake—Eight, 8-oz glasses a day is recommended if not on a fluid restriction.
- Keep the drainage bag off of the floor and below the bladder level.
- Keep the tubing straight and use a securing device. A kinked, twisted or bent tube will prevent urine from flowing freely out of your bladder and into the drainage bag.
- Empty the drainage bag at least two or three times a day. The bag should not be allowed to become full.
- Clean the leg and drainage bags on a daily basis. Commercially prepared solutions are available from suppliers or manufacturers. Common household solutions can be used also, such as vinegar and water (1:3 dilution) or bleach (5.25%) and water (1:10 dilution).

- To obtain a clean catch sample, collect it in an unused and newly applied catheter and drainage bag.

## Trouble shooting

If using the non-adhesive sheath, use a double sided or silicon strip rather than foam to allow for elasticity and expansion, especially for patients with intact erectile function.

If the external catheter falls off:

- Check the penis in the position it is in when sheath falls off.
- If the penis retracts in certain positions, a shorter size sheath may be needed.
- Determine if any creams were used prior to application of the sheath. Adhesive will not stick with use of creams.

If there is no urine in the drainage bag, check to make sure:

- that the sheath did not fall off or is not too tight
- the tubing is not kinked, bent or twisted.

See the Danbury Hospital urinary drainage bag education fact sheet for more information on care of the urinary drainage bag.

*Source:*

*Wound, Ostomy, Continence Nurses Society EXTERNAL  
CATHETER FACT SHEET 2008 Accessed October 2008  
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*For more information, or to learn about the specialized services and programs available at Danbury Hospital, please visit [www.DanburyHospital.org](http://www.DanburyHospital.org)*