Danbury Hospital

Danbury Hospital Patient Education Sheet

How do I Care for My Indwelling or Foley Catheter?

Why is daily catheter care important?

An indwelling, or Foley catheter is a thin, flexible drainage tube that drains your urine when you are unable to empty your bladder independently. The catheter is attached to a drainage bag which collects the urine. This is considered a “closed system,” which means that there are no openings from your urinary bladder to the drainage bag.

It is important to maintain this closed system to keep bacteria and other germs from entering your urinary system and causing an infection. Your urinary system is normally sterile and having an indwelling catheter in the bladder creates a way for bacteria to easily enter your body. Daily cleansing of both the catheter and the area where the catheter enters your body (called the urethral meatus) is important to decrease the chances of getting a urinary tract infection. Cleansing is also important after each bowel movement to prevent infection.

How do I clean around the catheter?

Gather all of the supplies needed for your catheter care. This would include:

- A basin of clean warm water or use of a clean sink with running warm water.
- Two clean washcloths and a clean towel
- Soap

1. Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water before and after cleaning and touching the catheter, drainage bag, or urine.
2. Apply soap and water to one washcloth and thoroughly clean the area around the meatus then rinse well to remove all soap.
3. Rinse the washcloth, apply more soap, and clean the rest of the area between your legs and buttocks. For female patients, it is important to wipe from front to back to prevent an infection. For male patients, it is important to begin at the tip of the penis and wash downward toward the body.
4. Rinse and pat dry the area well with the towel.
5. Change the water in the basin and clean the catheter next.
6. Apply soap to the second washcloth.
7. Firmly grasp the catheter to prevent tugging on it and gently wash the tubing. Begin at the meatus and wash the first 2 to 3 inches of the tube, moving away from the body toward the drainage bag. **DO NOT** wash from the tubing toward the body because this may push bacteria into the meatus.
8. Gently remove any drainage or crusting that may be present on the tube.
9. Gently dry the tubing.
10. Do not use any powders in this area.

11. After cleansing, the catheter should be secured to the inner thigh to prevent irritation around the meatus and to prevent pulling the catheter out.

How do I empty the drainage bag?

Your drainage bag should be emptied, at a minimum, two to three times a day. The bag should not be allowed to become full. This will put pressure on the catheter and cause tugging and irritation at the meatus. It also will be too heavy and bulky to carry around.

1. Wash your hands before and after emptying the bag.
2. The bag should be kept below the level of the hip(bladder) at all times to prevent urine from flowing back into the tubing and into the bladder.
3. Use a clean container to empty urine into if your doctor wants you to measure the amounts in the drainage bag. Otherwise, you can also empty the bag directly into the toilet.
4. Carefully open the spigot (pour spout) at the bottom of the bag to empty. Do not allow the spigot to touch the container or toilet. This causes contamination of the bag with bacteria.
5. Clean the end of the spigot with rubbing alcohol on a gauze pad or cotton ball.
6. Close the spigot securely to prevent leaking.
7. Do not allow the drainage bag to rest on the floor.

Notes/Additional Information: _____

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Emr, K, & Ryan, R. (2004). Best practice for indwelling catheter in the home setting. *Home Healthcare Nurse*, 22(12).

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