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Care of Indwelling Catheter

A catheter is a drainage tube which is passed up the water passage (urethra) into the bladder. It is placed to assist bladder drainage when this is not otherwise possible, either due to obstruction (eg. Prostate enlargement or urethral stricture) or poor bladder function.

To ensure your catheter functions properly:

- You will need to drink at least 2 Litres of fluid daily – this will help prevent infections & catheter blockage.
- Cranberry juice or tablets taken daily may also assist in the reduction of infections.
- Wash the skin twice a day with unscented soap and water, where the catheter runs into the body. If you have a suprapubic catheter you may remove the dressing after one day and if the site is clean & dry there is no need to reapply a dressing.
- When using a leg or overnight bag, your catheter should always be positioned in a downhill direction to encourage free drainage.
- Take daily walks as tolerated – regular exercise helps prevent blockages.
- Avoid constipation as this can prevent the catheter draining properly and can affect your ability to urinate if your catheter is to be removed.
- Secure the catheter firmly to the thigh (urethral) or abdomen (suprapubic) with tape or catheter strap, to prevent damage to your bladder or urethra.
- Your catheter may be connected to a drainage bag or catheter valve. If you have a valve, it must be released every 3-4 hours to empty the bladder (or whenever your bladder feels full). If you are developing bladder infections you should use a drainage bag rather than a valve.
- A larger bag may be connected to the outlet valve of the leg bag or catheter valve for extra drainage overnight. In the morning this bag is emptied and rinsed out with Milton's or vinegar & water and allowed to dry.
- Always wash your hands before and after handling your catheter, bags or valve.
- The catheter needs to be changed every 4-6 weeks. Ensure you know who is doing this for you.
- Please contact Dr Bariol, your GP or the nearest hospital if:
 - You have fever, chills, pain or offensive smelling urine
 - If the catheter is not draining or seems blocked