

SCI Neurogenic Bladder: Indwelling Catheters

An **indwelling catheter** is a tube inserted into the urethra that drains the bladder continuously.

An indwelling catheter may be the best method of bladder management for people with SCI who:

- Cannot perform intermittent catheterization due to poor hand function.
- Have high bladder pressures or vesicoureteral reflux. Vesicoureteral reflux is the backward flow of urine from the bladder to the upper urinary tract (ureters and kidneys).
- Have not been able to use other methods successfully.

Size:

The size and type of catheter you use and your schedule for changing your catheter depends on your particular needs.

- Catheter size: use the smallest size that drains well (14 or 16 Fr) and a 10 ml balloon filled with 10 ml of sterile water.
- Type: silicone-coated or all-silicone catheters may prevent latex allergies.
- Schedule: monthly changes are common, but you may need to do this more frequently, such as to prevent or manage clogging of the catheter.

Position:

Catheter and tubing should be anchored to the inner thigh for women and to the upper thigh for men. Keeping your catheter secured this way can lower your risk of getting urinary tract infections (UTIs) and injury to urethral passage. Check the amount of slack as you change positions, since this can vary.

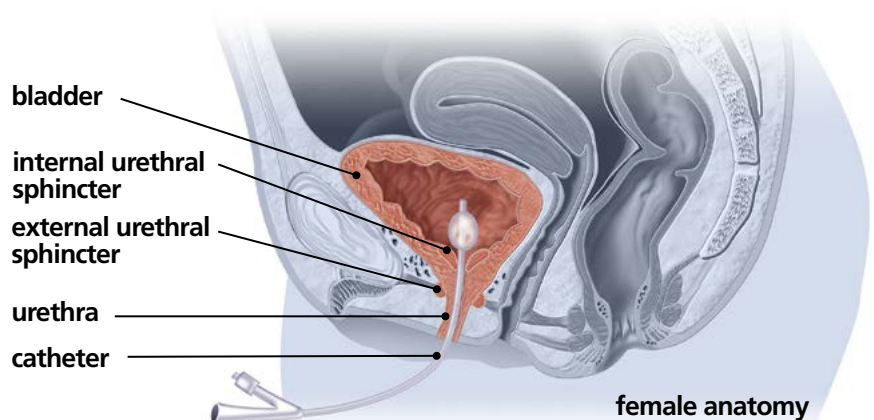
Daily care:

Clean the opening of your urethra daily with soap and water. Make sure to clean the area from front to back.

Leaks:

If your catheter is leaking:

- Check for kinks or clogs.
- Keep urine dilute (very pale yellow in color).
- Do NOT keep increasing catheter or balloon size because upsizing the catheter may lead to continued enlargement of the urethra. It may also cause irritation of the bladder, leading to spasms.
- See a urologist if leaking continues. You may need bladder relaxing medication or bladder irrigation.

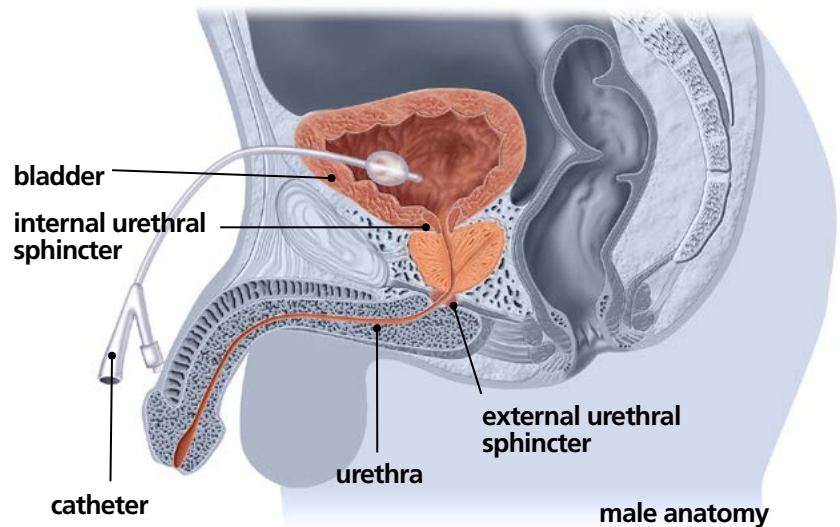


Suprapubic catheterization:

A suprapubic catheter is a tube that drains the bladder through a surgically created passage in the lower abdominal wall. Like a urethral indwelling catheter, the tube is secured with an inflatable balloon to keep the bladder constantly draining urine into a collection bag. A suprapubic catheter can help to:

- Prevent injury to the urethra
- Make sexual activity more convenient
- Allow use of a larger bore tube for drainage
- Make it easier for patients or caregivers to change the catheter

See *SCI Neurogenic Bladder: Urinary Tract Infections* for guidelines on obtaining a urine specimen for culture, treatment and follow-up.



Resources:

For patients:

- Video on catheter insertion (University of Alabama at Birmingham, June 5, 2012): Note that the video recommends testing the balloon by inflating and deflating before catheter insertion. This is no longer recommended due to the possibility of incomplete deflation causing trauma to the urethral passage when the catheter is inserted.
 - Male: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tOA2yDin74g>
 - Female: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=50crK4ADMCA>
- Video on catheter irrigation from Anisa Young, CRRN: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wOvUPEM0Gpw&feature=youtu.be>
- Consortium for Spinal Cord Medicine. (2010). Bladder Management Following Spinal Cord Injury: What You Should Know. A Guide for People with Spinal Cord Injury. Washington, D.C.: Paralyzed Veterans of America. http://www.pva.org/media/pdf/Consumer_Guide_Bladder_071410.pdf

For health care providers:

- Consortium for Spinal Cord Medicine. (2006). Bladder Management for Adults with Spinal Cord Injury: A Clinical Practice Guideline. Washington, D.C.: Paralyzed Veterans of America. http://www.pva.org/media/pdf/CPGBladderManageme_1AC7B4.pdf

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Disclaimer: This information is not meant to replace the advice from a medical professional. You should consult your health care provider regarding specific medical concerns or treatment.

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