



# The British Association of Urological Surgeons

## Self-catheterisation in women

### Information about putting a catheter in by yourself

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You have this leaflet because you are doing self-catheterisation or are about to start. We also call this clean intermittent self-catheterisation. The aim of this leaflet is to give you information about what this involves. Expert doctors in the UK have written it. Please also remember the advice your own doctor or nurse has already given you.

#### Key points

- You might need to use a catheter if your bladder does not empty properly.
- For most people, it is a better option than a catheter that stays in all the time. We call this a permanent catheter.
- Most people find the steps easy to learn and do.
- If you do have problems, your district nurse or GP can usually sort out the issues for you.

#### What is self-catheterisation?

Using a catheter means you put a soft, bendy tube into your bladder. This tube is called a catheter. It goes in through the small opening where pee comes out. You can get someone to help you if you can't manage alone.

Your pee flows out through the tube until your bladder is empty. Then you take the tube out and throw it away. You use a new tube each time you need to empty your bladder.

This is helpful when your bladder cannot empty by itself. It is different from a tube that stays in all the time. These tubes drain pee without you doing anything.

Emptying your bladder fully can help stop pee infections and protect your kidneys. It may also feel more comfortable than having a tube in all the time. Some people find it helps stop leaks when the bladder gets too full.

#### What do I need?

These are the basic things you need:

- **The catheters**  
At first, these will be supplied from the clinic. You can order them on repeat script from your GP or independent catheter service.

- **Baby wipes**

Use these to keep yourself clean.

- **Lubricating jelly**

Most tubes come covered in jelly. If you find it hard to put the tube in, you can use extra jelly. You can get this from your chemist or doctor.

- **A toilet or a bottle to catch the pee**

You need somewhere for the pee to go. Some tubes come with a bag already attached.

- **A small mirror and a good light**

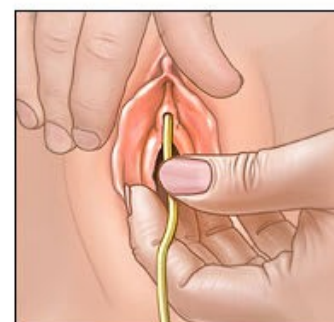
These can help you see better. This is good when you are learning how to do it.

## How do I use the catheter?

Your nurse will show you how to do this step by step. Then they will watch while you try it yourself.

Here is the way it is usually taught:

- Wash your hands with soap and water. You may use hand gel.
- Find a comfortable position. You can sit on the toilet or lie on the bed. You may want to put a towel or waterproof sheet under you.
- Take off your underwear and move your clothes out of the way.
- Keep your knees apart. This makes it easier to put the tube in.
- Use a light and a mirror to help you see the small opening where pee comes out. This is in front of your vagina and behind your clitoris.
- If you can't see it well, gently pull the skin around the area upwards and forwards with your fingers. You might be able to feel the opening like a tiny dip on a soft bump.
- Clean the area between the folds of skin from front to back. Use baby wipes or plain soap and water.
- Get the catheter ready. Follow the instructions for your type of catheter.
- Hold the catheter about 5 centimetres from the tip. That is about 2 inches.
- Gently slide it into the opening until pee starts to come out. Then push it in about 2 to 3 centimetres more. That is about another inch.
- If no pee comes out, the tube might have gone into the vagina by mistake. This does not hurt you. Take it out and try again, further upwards.
- When the pee has stopped, slowly pull the tube out. Turn it gently as you take it out. This helps the last bit of pee to come out.
- Throw away the tube and the container of pee.
- Wash your hands again.



Most tubes are used once and then thrown away. Put it in a disposal bag with your household rubbish or in a sanitary bin. Do not flush it down the toilet.

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## What if I have problems?

- If you find it hard, take a break. Try again when you feel calm.
- There is a choice of catheters for self-catheterisation. Your nurse can show you different ones if you find it tricky.
- If you cannot do it yourself, speak to your nurse. You might need a tube that stays in.
- If you cannot take the tube out, wait a few moments and try again. Coughing while you pull it out can help.
- Speak to your doctor if:
  - you feel pain in your lower tummy
  - you feel poorly
  - you have hot and cold spells

These can be signs of a pee infection.

## Important

We have worked hard to make this leaflet clear and correct. But it cannot replace advice from your own doctor or nurse. Always ask them if you are worried or unsure.

## What should I do with this leaflet?

You can keep this leaflet. If you have more questions, ask your doctor or nurse. They can explain more.

### Online access

You can see this leaflet on the internet.

Scan the special picture (QR code).

### Feedback

We'd love to know what you think! You can share your thoughts by emailing us at [admin@baus.org.uk](mailto:admin@baus.org.uk)



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