Intermountain® Healthcare

Clean Intermittent Catheterization for Women

What is Clean Intermittent Catheterization (CIC)?

Clean intermittent catheterization (**CIC**) is a way to empty your bladder. You can do CIC yourself by inserting a small tube (**catheter**) into your urethra. Doing CIC is sometimes called "self-catheterization" or "self-cathing."

Why do I need CIC?

You may need to do CIC if you have urinary incontinence (leaking), urinary retention (are not able to urinate), or another medical condition.

Your bladder needs to be emptied regularly and completely. If it's not, you have increased risk of developing a urinary tract infection.

How often do I need to do CIC?

It depends. **If you feel the urge to urinate,** then do so as you would normally — and follow with CIC if you feel you haven't emptied your bladder completely. For most women, this means self-cathing about every 3 or 4 hours.

Some patients will not feel the urge to urinate. In this case, your healthcare providers will help you plan a regular schedule based on your lifestyle and your medical needs.

In either case, empty your bladder first thing in the morning and when you go to bed at night.

How do I do CIC?

A nurse will teach you CIC the first time. You'll have a chance to practice and ask questions. At home, you can refer to the instructions on the next page.

Keep in mind that self-cathing is a skill like any other. As you gain experience, you'll feel less awkward.

How do I care for the catheter?

It's important to use a clean catheter to prevent a painful urinary tract infection. If you have enough catheters, use a new one each time.

If you don't have enough catheters to use a new one each time, be sure to clean your catheter after each use. The last step of the instructions on the next page explains how to do this. Then replace your catheter with a new one every week or so, or if the catheter becomes damaged or plugged.

When to call your doctor

Watch for signs of infection. Contact your doctor if you experience any of the following:

- Fever
- Foul smelling urine
- Cloudy urine
- Urine that is changed in color or has blood in it
- Urine leaking between catheterizations (new onset)
- Painful urination, or pain with catheterization
- Inability to insert the catheter

CIC steps

1 **Gather the supplies you'll need and put them where you can reach them without losing your balance.** Here's what you need:
   - Catheter
   - Water-soluble lubricant (such as KY Jelly; do not use Vaseline)
   - Cleaning wipes (baby wipes are fine)
   - Mirror, or other adaptive equipment you may need
   - Drainage container to collect urine (optional)
   - Storage bag to store equipment in between catheterization times

2 **Wash your hands well with soap and water.** You don't need to wear gloves (though medical staff do). If you want to wear gloves, use non-latex gloves.

3 **Position yourself as comfortably as possible.** You can sit on the toilet with your legs spread apart or stand next to toilet with one leg up on toilet. You may prefer another way — do what works best for you.

4 **Cover two inches of the end of the catheter with the lubricant.**

5 **Clean your genitals.** Separate your labia and wipe from front to back with a warm, soapy washcloth or cleaning wipe.

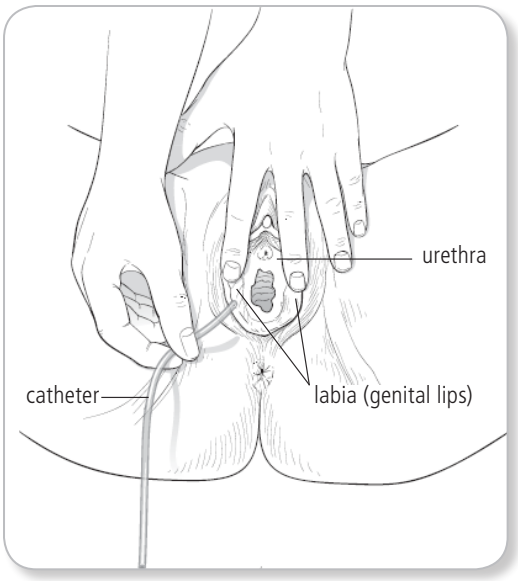
6 **Hold the labia apart with your non-dominant hand.** (Your non-dominant hand is the one you DON'T write with.)

7 While holding the labia apart, **grasp the catheter with your other hand as you would a pencil.** Your fingers should be about 3 inches from the tip of the catheter.

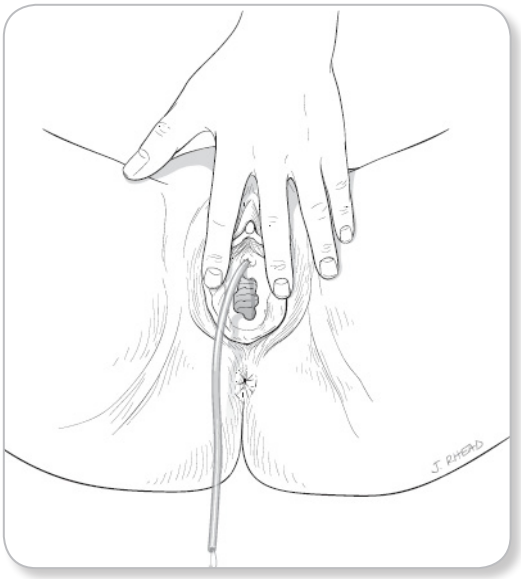
8 **Slowly slide the lubricated end of the catheter up into your urethra about 3 inches,** or until the urine starts to flow. Make sure the other end of the catheter is over the toilet or collection container.

9 After the urine starts to flow, **gently push in the catheter another inch or 2.** Leave the catheter in place until the urine flow stops.

10 **When urine stops flowing, slowly start to take the catheter out,** twisting it gently as it comes out. Usually, more urine will flow as you do this. Stop each time more urine flows so that your bladder empties completely.



Steps 6 and 7: getting ready to insert the catheter



Steps 8 and 9: draining the bladder through the catheter

11 **Wipe yourself clean,** front to back, using the washcloth or cleaning wipe.

12 **If you will be using the catheter again, wash and store it** after you take it all the way out.
   - Wash the catheter with soap and water, then rinse it so that water runs all the way through.
   - Shake the catheter to remove water on the inside.
   - Use a clean towel to dry the outside.
   - Finally, store the catheter in a clean, dry plastic bag.

© 2012 Intermountain Healthcare. All rights reserved. The content presented here is for your information only. It is not a substitute for professional medical advice, and it should not be used to diagnose or treat a health problem or disease. Please consult your healthcare provider if you have any questions or concerns. More health information is available at **intermountainhealthcare.org.** **Patient and Provider Publications 801-442-2963 FS328 - 12/12** *Also available in Spanish.*