

Catheter-Associated Urinary Tract Infections

What is a catheter-associated urinary tract infection (CAUTI)?

CAUTI is a type of urinary tract infection that happens when someone in the hospital or recovering at home has a **urethral** [yoo-Ree-thruhl] catheter (also called a Foley catheter). This thin, flexible tube is used to drain urine out of your body. People who have a catheter are more at risk for getting a urinary tract infection.

If not treated, a CAUTI can cause bladder, kidney, or prostate infections that can cause serious health complications and mean that you have to stay in the hospital longer.

What causes CAUTI?

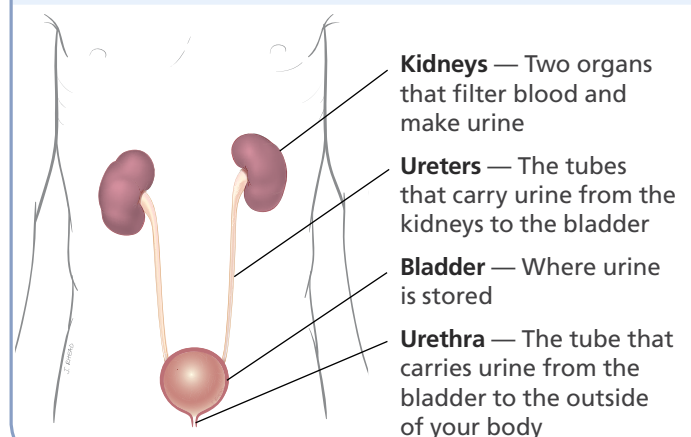
Germes that typically live in the intestines (where they don't cause an infection) can spread and cause infection when they enter the urinary system. This can happen when a catheter is put into the urethra or while the catheter is in place, especially if handwashing is not done properly or the area around the genitals and anus (where poop comes out) are not cleaned well.

When is a urinary catheter needed?

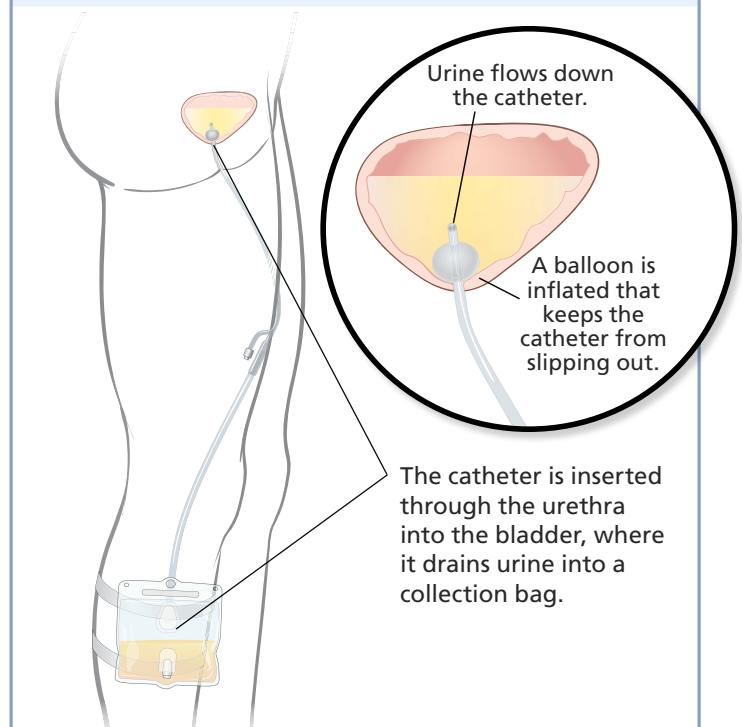
A urinary catheter might be needed when you:

- Can't urinate (pee) on your own
- Have treatment or intensive care where there is a need to measure how much urine you make
- Have certain kidney and bladder tests
- Are unable to control your bladder

The Urinary Tract



Urethral Catheter in Place



A urethral catheter is a drainage tube that is inserted into the urinary bladder through the urethra (the tube that empties urine from your bladder). It is left in place to drain urine into a bag.

What are the symptoms of CAUTI?

Sometimes a person can have a CAUTI and not have any symptoms until the infection becomes more serious. Be sure to tell a healthcare provider right away if you or a loved one has any of these symptoms:

- A burning feeling, pressure, or pain in the lower abdomen (belly)
- Fever or chills
- Urine in the collecting bag that is cloudy or bloody (pink or red)
- A burning feeling in the urethra or genital area
- Aching in the back where your kidneys are (at the lower edge of the ribs on either side of the spine)
- Nausea and vomiting
- Confusion, not being alert, or change in behavior (especially in older people)

How is CAUTI treated?

If you have a high risk for or symptoms of CAUTI, your healthcare provider will order urine, blood, or other tests. Treatment may be different depending on the type of infection you have and could involve:

- **Taking antibiotics.** Your healthcare provider will likely prescribe antibiotic medicines to kill the germs. If you aren't having symptoms, you may not be given these medicines. It is important to prevent an increase in germs that can't be killed by certain antibiotics.
- **Removing the catheter.** If your condition makes it possible to remove the catheter, this will likely stop the infection. Talk to your healthcare provider about this option.
- **Changing the catheter.** If you still need a catheter for a while, your doctor may remove the old catheter and replace it with a different one. This may help stop the infection.

The longer you have a catheter, the higher your chance of getting a CAUTI.

Preventing CAUTI IN THE HOSPITAL

YOUR HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS will do these things:

- Prescribe a catheter only when needed.
- Remove the catheter as soon as it is no longer needed.
- Clean hands thoroughly before placing or caring for a catheter (see page 3).
- Wear sterile gloves and use special cleansers around the genital area when placing the catheter.
- **Hang the collection bag lower than your bladder to prevent urine from flowing back into the bladder.**
- Empty the collection bag regularly.

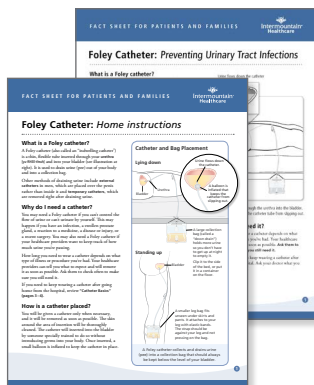
YOU can do these things:

- **Every day,** ask your healthcare provider how long you need to have the catheter.
- Ask all care providers to be sure to clean their hands (see page 3) and wear gloves before touching your catheter.
- Clean your own hands (see page 3) before and after caring for your own catheter if you have been taught to do so.
- Make sure the bag is lower than your bladder. Tell a provider if it isn't.
- Ask your nurse what cleansers to use to decrease germs that could get into your urinary tract and how often to use them.
- **NEVER** disconnect the catheter and drain tube. Doing so lets germs into the catheter.

Preventing CAUTI AT HOME

If you are discharged from the hospital with a catheter still in place, be sure that you:

- Understand the instructions your care providers give you on how to care for the catheter at home.
- Ask for these Intermountain fact sheets:
 - **Foley Catheter: Home Instructions**
 - **Foley Catheter: Preventing Urinary Tract Infections**
- Clean your hands thoroughly before and after doing catheter care (see the illustrations at right)
- Keep the collection bag below the level of your bladder and off of the floor.
- Don't tug, pull, or disconnect the tubing.
- Drink extra fluids if your doctor says to. Fluids will keep urine flowing and can help prevent complications with your catheter.
- Talk to your healthcare provider:
 - If you feel burning, itching, or any new pains. These could be symptoms of a CAUTI.
 - About how long you will need the catheter.
 - If you need to make a follow-up appointment. Record the appointment in the space below.



Hand washing with soap and water

- 1 Wet hands with warm, running water.
- 2 Apply liquid soap or use a clean bar of soap. Lather well.
- 3 Rub your hands together vigorously for at least 15 to 20 seconds. Be sure to scrub all surfaces of your hands and fingers.
- 4 Rinse well. Dry your hands with a clean or disposable towel.
- 5 Use a towel to turn off the faucet.

Hand washing with a hand sanitizer

- 1 Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Apply it to the palm of your hand. Read the label to see how much to apply.
- 2 Be sure to cover all surfaces of your hands and fingers. Rub your hands together until they are dry.

People can become infected if they touch surfaces that are contaminated with germs. Healthcare providers can spread the germs if they don't wash their hands often enough. If you don't see your healthcare providers clean their hands, please ask them to do so.



My follow-up appointment

Date/Time: _____

Place: _____

Doctor: _____



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