

Foley Catheter: Preventing urinary tract infections (UTIs)

What is a Foley catheter?

A **Foley catheter** [KATH-eh-ter] (also called an “indwelling catheter”) is a thin, flexible tube used to drain urine (pee) out of your body. Urine normally drains from your body through your **urethra** [yoo-REETH-ruh]. A healthcare provider places the catheter tube in your urethra and moves it into your bladder. A tiny balloon near the tip of the catheter is inflated to keep it from slipping out of your bladder.

Why do I need one?

You may need a Foley catheter if you can’t urinate (pee) or control the flow of your urine. This may happen if you have an infection, a swollen prostate gland, a reaction to medicine, a disease or injury, or a recent surgery. You may also need a Foley catheter if your healthcare providers want to keep close track of how much urine you’re passing.

How long will I need to wear it?

How long you’ll wear the catheter depends on what type of illness or procedure you have. Your healthcare providers will remove it as soon as possible. While in the hospital, ask your providers to check each day to see if you still need it. Some patients may need to keep wearing a catheter after going home. Ask your care team what you should expect.

What do I need to do?

- 1 Ask your nurse every day how much longer you need to wear the catheter.
- 2 Do not touch the area around your catheter.
- 3 Make sure the area around your catheter stays clean.
- 4 Make sure the drainage bag is below the level of your bladder. This will keep urine from flowing back into your bladder. If urine flows back into your bladder, you could get an infection.
- 5 Make sure the drainage bag is kept off the floor.
- 6 Tell your providers if you feel burning, itching, or any new pains. These are symptoms of a UTI and need to be treated.
- 7 Drink extra fluids if your doctor says to. Fluids will keep urine flowing and can help prevent complications with your catheter.
- 8 Don’t tug, pull, or disconnect the tubing.

What risks do catheters have?

While you’re wearing a Foley catheter, you have a greater risk of getting a urinary tract infection (UTI). This infection happens when germs get into your bladder from your urethra or catheter tube. It can be painful and annoying. If the infection spreads to your kidneys, it can become more serious. But infections can usually be avoided. Your nurses will do everything possible to help prevent a UTI. See the box above for ways YOU can help prevent a UTI.

How and when will the catheter be placed?

The catheter may be inserted before you leave surgery, when you're asleep and can't feel it. Or, it may be inserted when you're awake. If this is the case, the insertion may feel uncomfortable.

The skin around the area of insertion will be thoroughly cleaned. The catheter will then be placed by a person trained to place catheters without introducing germs into your body.

How will my nurses help?

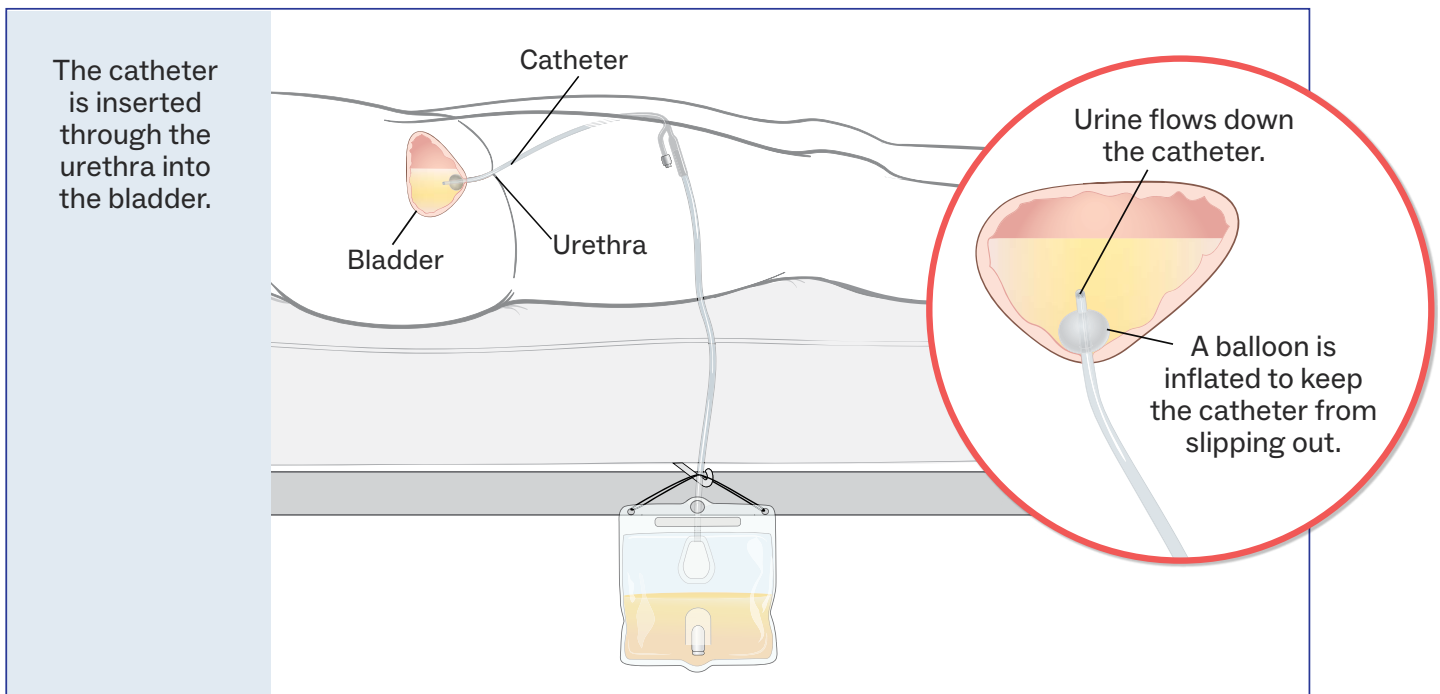
To reduce your risk of getting a UTI, your nurses will:

- **Check every day** to see if you still need your catheter.
- **Wash their hands thoroughly** before and after touching your catheter.

- **Clean the area around your catheter** every day.
- **Check for kinks in the catheter tube.** The urine needs to be able to flow smoothly down to the bag and not get backed up.
- **Keep all parts of the tubing and bag away from germs.** No part of it should rest on the floor where it could get dirty or damaged.
- **Check for signs of infection** around the catheter. These can include inflammation, pus, or irritated skin.
- **Empty the drainage bag.**
- **Measure** the amount of urine in the drainage bag.

What if I get a urinary tract infection?

If you get a UTI, you may be treated with antibiotics. Your catheter will be changed or possibly removed.



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