FACT SHEET FOR PATIENTS AND FAMILIES

Foley Catheter: Preventing Urinary Tract Infections

What is a Foley catheter?
A Foley catheter (also called an “indwelling catheter”) is a thin flexible tube used to drain urine out of your body. Urine normally drains from your body through your urethra. With a Foley catheter, a healthcare provider inserts the tube through your urethra to your bladder. After the catheter is inserted, a tiny balloon near the tip is inflated to keep the catheter from slipping out of your bladder. In some cases, other methods of draining urine are used. These can be external catheters in men, which are placed over the penis rather than inside it. Or, they can be temporary catheters which are removed right after draining the urine.

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

How and when will it be placed?
You will be given a catheter only when necessary, and it will be removed as soon as possible. The skin around the area of insertion will be thoroughly cleaned. The catheter will then be placed by a person specially trained to place it without introducing germs into your body.

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.

Will the catheter be uncomfortable?
While you’re wearing a catheter, you may feel as if your bladder is full and you need to urinate. You also may feel some discomfort when you turn over if your catheter tube gets pulled. These are normal problems that usually don’t require attention. But if you feel burning, itching, or sharp pain, be sure to tell your healthcare providers.

How long will I need it?
How long you need to wear a catheter depends on what type of illness or procedure you’ve had. Your healthcare providers will remove it as soon as possible. **Ask them to check often to make sure you still need it.**

Some patients may need to keep wearing a catheter after going home from the hospital. Ask your doctor what you should expect.
Preventing urinary tract infections while wearing a Foley catheter

While you’re wearing a Foley catheter, you have a greater risk of getting a urinary tract infection (UTI). A UTI occurs when germs enter your urinary system through your urethra. It can be painful and annoying. If the infection spreads to your kidneys, it can have more serious consequences. But infections can usually be avoided. Your nurses will do everything possible to help prevent a UTI. There’s a lot you can do to help prevent infection as well.

What YOU can do

- **Ask your nurse every day** how much longer you need to wear the catheter.
- **Do not touch the area around your catheter.**
- **Keep yourself clean.** Make sure the area around your catheter stays clean.
- **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.
- **Make sure the drainage bag is kept off the floor.**
- **Tell us if you feel burning, itching, or any new pains.** These are symptoms of urinary tract infection and need to be treated.
- **Drink extra fluids** if your doctor says to. Fluids will keep urine flowing and can help prevent complications with your catheter.
- **Don’t tug, pull or disconnect** the tubing.

What YOUR NURSES will do

- **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 urinary tract infection you may be treated with antibiotics. Your catheter will be changed or possibly removed.