

# Emptying your bladder with a catheter

For women



Your doctor has asked you to empty your bladder with a catheter. This technique is called “intermittent self-catheterization”. This sheet explains how to do it.

## Why do I need to do this procedure?

This procedure allows you to empty your bladder. It's needed when the bladder doesn't empty completely or won't empty at all. This can be due to:

- weakness of the bladder muscle (the muscle you squeeze to push urine out)
- a blockage of the urinary tract (urethra)

When the bladder empties poorly, there's a risk of urinary tract infections. If you have repeated infections, these can damage the kidneys. To avoid these complications, there are two options to empty your bladder: a long-term (indwelling) catheter or a temporary (intermittent) catheter. Using intermittent catheters has the following advantages:

- fewer urinary tract infections
- less risk of stones forming in the bladder
- no tube and bulky drainage bag
- more freedom to do your activities
- you can have sex

**Drink at least 2 liters of fluid per day or follow your doctor's recommendations on this subject.**



## When should I do it?

Your doctor or nurse will tell you how often you should empty your bladder with the catheter. This keeps the bladder from becoming too full. You'll see with your doctor how often is best for you.

Most people do it:

- 1** before or after breakfast
- 2** before or after lunch
- 3** before or after dinner
- 4** at bedtime
- 5** if necessary, between meals

If your doctor has asked you to measure how much urine comes out through the catheter, it's important to do that. If the amount is more than 500 ml, you'll need to empty your bladder more often. If you can still urinate naturally, do it before doing the catheterization.

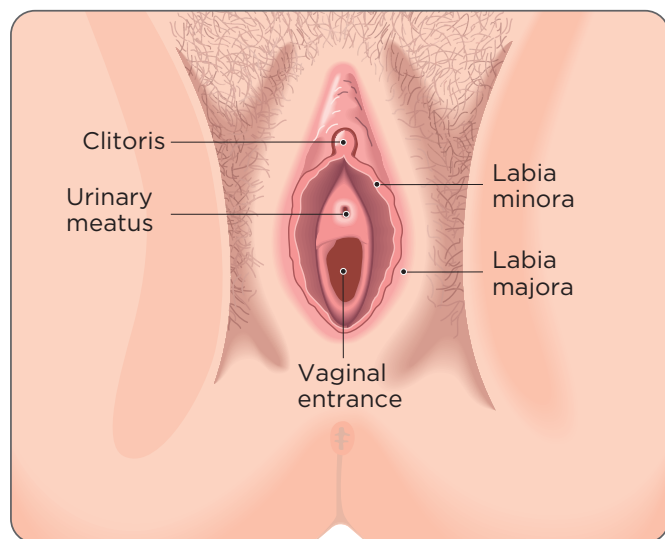
## How do I prepare for this treatment?

To avoid getting a urinary tract infection:

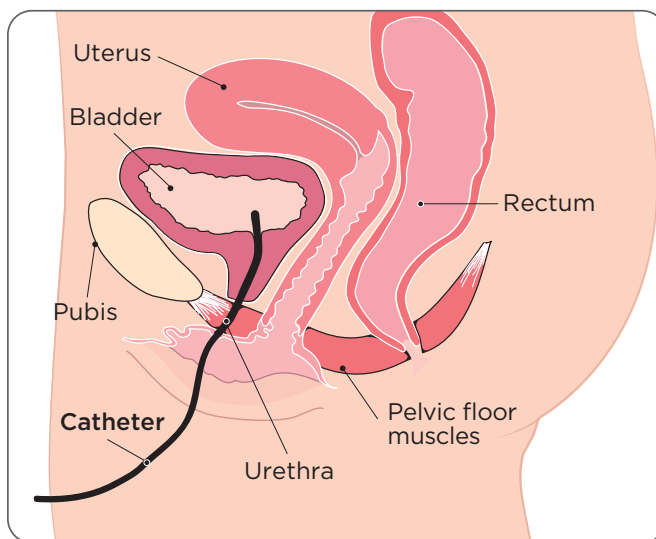
- keep your nails clean and short
- wash your hands whenever it's required during the steps of the procedure (see Appendix 1, pages 5 and 6)

To help you the first times, see where the urinary meatus is located in the diagram below. This is the opening through which the catheter should enter. Over time, it will become easy.

**Genitalia**



**The catheter**



## What equipment do I need?

- A catheter, also called a bladder catheter.
- A water-based lubricating gel in a single-use packet. **Never use petroleum jelly (e.g., Vaseline), an ointment, or mineral oil.** They won't provide enough lubrication, they'll irritate the tissues, and these products aren't eliminated by the body.
- A container with measurement markings for collecting urine (if you need to measure the amount).
- Two washcloths and a mild soap.
- A mirror.

## Where can I get this equipment?

The nurse will give you a list of stores that sell it.

## How do I do this procedure?

See Appendix 1, pages 4 to 6, for the steps of the procedure.

## Can I reuse the same catheter?

It's recommended that you use a new catheter every time you empty your bladder. This reduces the risk of infection.



If you're on immunosuppressive therapy, or if you often have urinary tract infections, your doctor will advise you to use catheters that are already lubricated (pre-lubricated or hydrophilic catheters).

## What if I have a problem?

### Difficulty inserting the catheter

Be sure to:

- put enough lubricant on it
- relax as much as possible when inserting the catheter, without holding your breath
- if necessary, take a break and try again

### A small amount of blood in the urine or on the tip of the catheter

Don't worry. This happens often in the beginning. This is due to a slight irritation of the tissues caused by the catheter. Everything should be back to normal in 1 or 2 days. Drink even more water than you were advised to drink, unless your doctor says otherwise.

## What signs should I watch out for?

See quickly your family doctor or go to a walk-in clinic if you have more than one of the following signs:

- stomach or back pain
- a burning or stinging sensation in your lower abdomen that's worse when you urinate
- feeling that you need to urinate often and urgently
- cloudy or smelly urine
- you sweat more than usual

These are signs of a urinary tract infection.

### Go to the emergency room quickly if:

- you have a fever of 38.5 C° (101.3 F°) or higher



- you have chills
- your urine is dark red
- there are blood clots in your urine
- you're not able to insert the catheter after 2 or 3 tries

## When will I see my doctor again?

You'll see your doctor again in 1 or 2 months, depending on the time frame you're given.

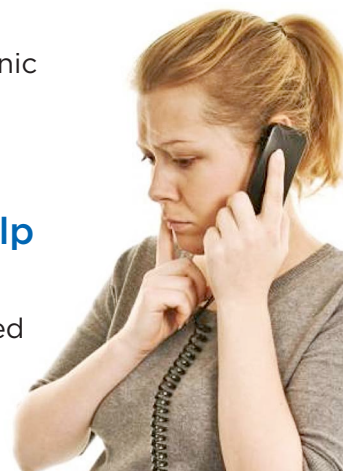
## What if I need to cancel or reschedule my appointment?

Leave a message in the voicemail of the Urology Clinic secretarial office.

**514 890-8000 ext. 36411**

## Who can I call for help or questions?

For any health concern related to your catheterization, you can call the CHUM Patient Health Line.



### CHUM PATIENT HEALTH LINE

**514 890-8086**

**24 hours a day, 7 days a week**

You're a CHUM patient? You have questions about your health status? A nurse can help you.



### USEFUL RESOURCES

Other CHUM health fact sheets are available. Ask your care team which fact sheets can help you.



You can also read them online.

[chumontreal.qc.ca/fiches-sante](http://chumontreal.qc.ca/fiches-sante)

*The content of this document in no way replaces the advice of your healthcare professional.*

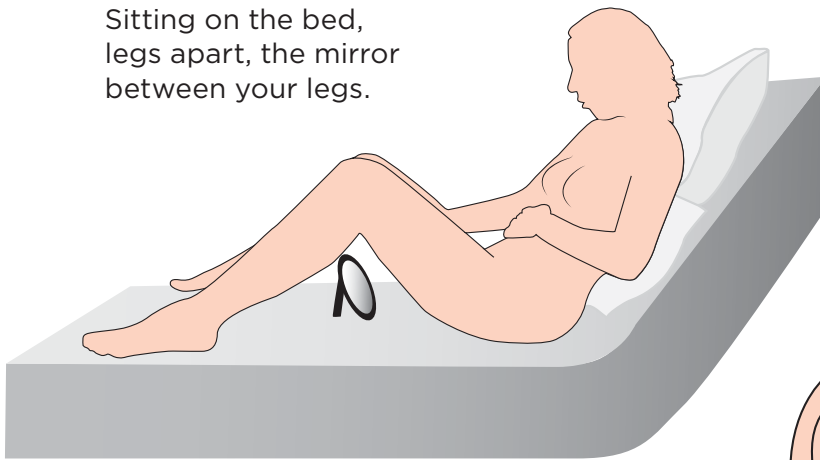
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## APPENDIX 1 : STEPS TO EMPTY MY BLADDER

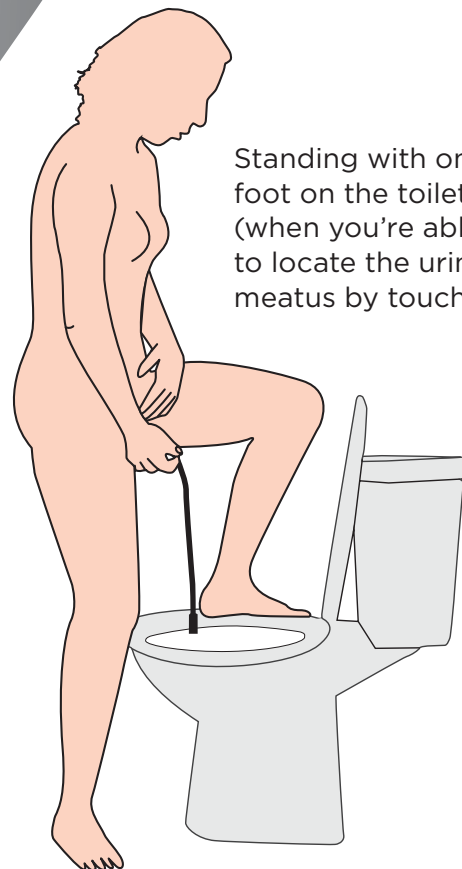
Here are the steps to follow to empty your bladder with the catheter.

Possible positions to do this procedure: take the position that's most comfortable for you.

Sitting on the bed,  
legs apart, the mirror  
between your legs.



Standing with one  
foot on the toilet  
(when you're able  
to locate the urinary  
meatus by touch).



Sitting on the toilet,  
one foot on a small  
bench.

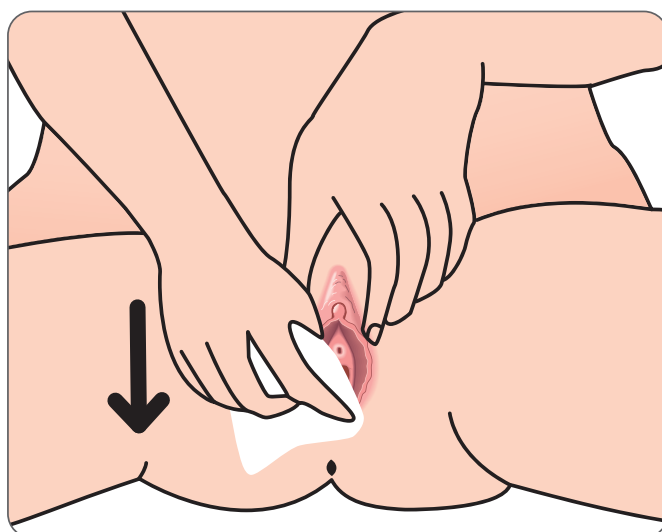


## PREPARATION

- 1 Get out the equipment.
- 2 Try to urinate if you can. This helps keep your bladder active.

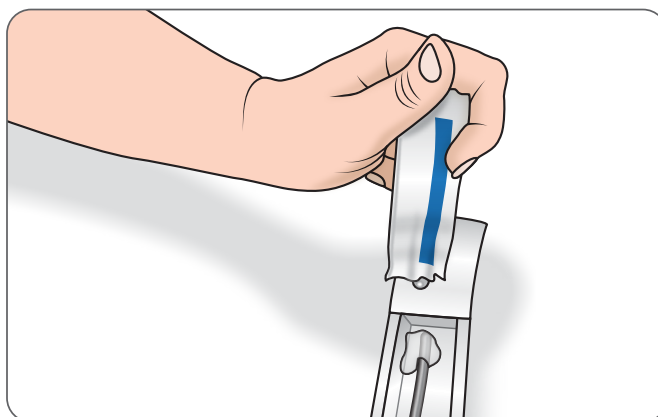


- 3 Wash your hands with soap and water. Prepare one washcloth that's wet and soapy, and another that's only wet. Rinse your hands and dry them well.
- 4 Take the position of your choice.

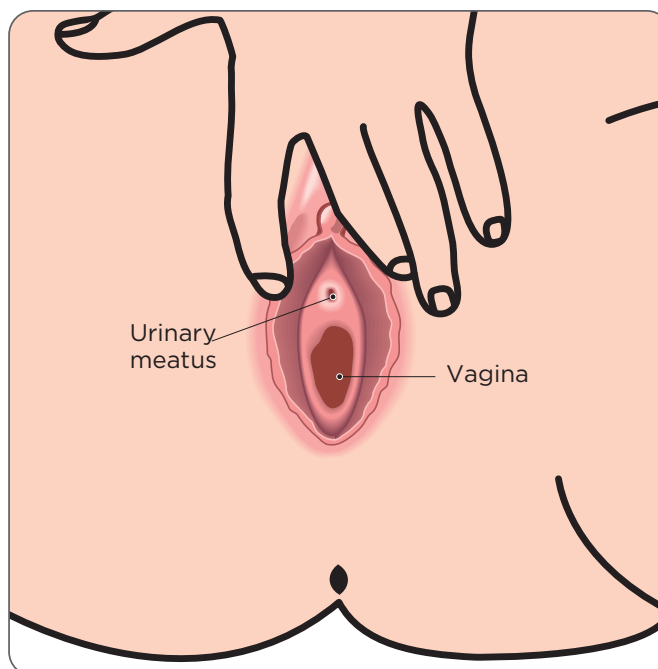


- 5 Open your legs wide and spread your labia minora. Wipe 3 times from front to back with the wet and soapy washcloth. Use a different corner of the washcloth each time. Rinse with the wet washcloth.

## INSERTING THE CATHETER

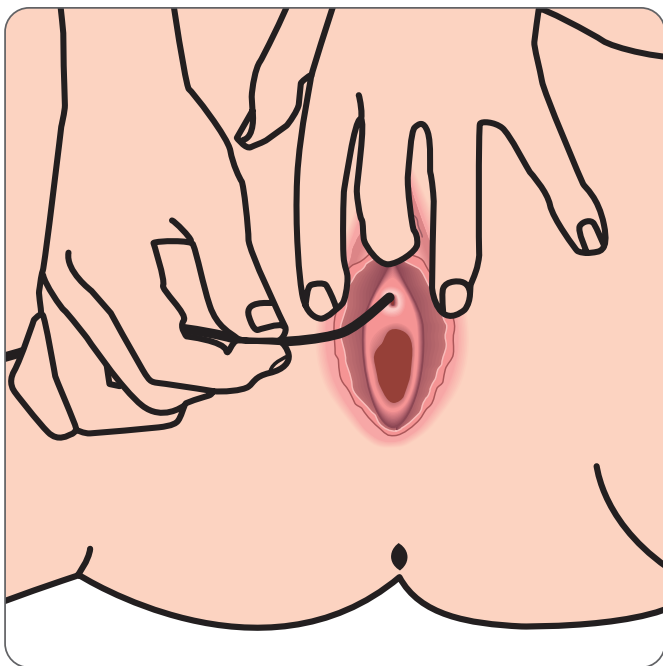


- 1 Open the package and leave the catheter inside without touching it. Put a good amount of lubricating gel on a length of about 5 centimeters (2 inches) at the end of the catheter. Don't touch the catheter with the lubricant packet. The nurse will show you how to do it.



- 2 Spread the labia minora again (with your left hand if you are right-handed). Place the mirror close by to see the urinary meatus. If you have trouble seeing it, push as if you were urinating. It will be more visible.

You can also feel it by touch with a finger. Over time, you'll recognize the sensation of the catheter touching the urinary meatus.

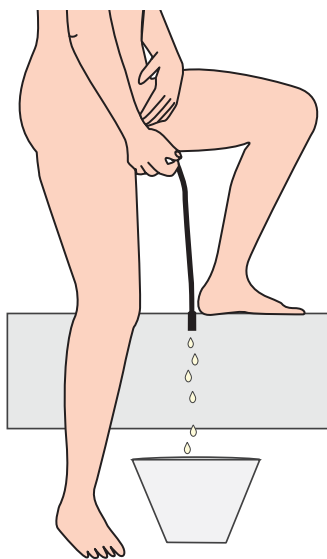


- 3** Take the catheter with your dominant hand. Gently insert it into the urinary meatus and push it in about 5 centimeters (2 inches), until the urine begins to flow. Push the catheter in a little more, 1 or 2 centimeters (1/2 to 1 inch). While doing this, try to stay relaxed.

If by mistake you inserted the catheter into your vagina, throw it away and take a new one.

#### EMPTYING THE BLADDER

- 1** The urine will drip down into the toilet or container.
- 2** When it has stopped, begin to remove the catheter by gently pulling on it. While you're pulling it, some more urine may leak out. If this happens, stop pulling and push with the muscles of your lower abdomen. This will help you empty your entire bladder.



When you go out, plan ahead. Always carry alcohol-based hand sanitizer, baby cleaning wipes, lubricating gel, and catheters.

If you're in a place without a sink directly next to the toilet bowl, you can still empty your bladder.

- 1** Wash your hands with the alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- 2** Clean your genitals with the cleaning wipes.
- 3** Do your catheterization as usual. To make it easier, you can use a pre-lubricated catheter. However, this type of catheter is more expensive.

If you have trouble doing your catheterization, talk to the nurse, who will be able to help you.



#### NOTEPAD



#### Questions

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## APPENDIX 2 : DAILY SCHEDULE

**U.N.** : Amount urinated through the natural channels

**U.C.** : Amount of urine collected with each catheterization

|       |      | Breakfast | Lunch | Dinner | Bedtime | Total |
|-------|------|-----------|-------|--------|---------|-------|
| DAY 1 | U.N. |           |       |        |         |       |
|       | U.C. |           |       |        |         |       |
| DAY 2 | U.N. |           |       |        |         |       |
|       | U.C. |           |       |        |         |       |
| DAY 3 | U.N. |           |       |        |         |       |
|       | U.C. |           |       |        |         |       |
| DAY 4 | U.N. |           |       |        |         |       |
|       | U.C. |           |       |        |         |       |
| DAY 5 | U.N. |           |       |        |         |       |
|       | U.C. |           |       |        |         |       |
| DAY 6 | U.N. |           |       |        |         |       |
|       | U.C. |           |       |        |         |       |
| DAY 7 | U.N. |           |       |        |         |       |
|       | U.C. |           |       |        |         |       |