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How to Catheterize Yourself Using Clean Technique (Female Patient)

GENERAL COMMENTS

Practice self-catheterizing in the position that you will be using the most - sitting, standing, in a wheelchair, or lying down. Empty your bladder of urine completely each time, and as often as directed by your doctor. Don't miss a catheterization. It's okay to be early, but never be late.

1. Gather the necessary equipment: Towelettes (or a soapy washcloth and a wet washcloth for rinsing), a towel, a container for collecting the urine (if toilet is not available), water-soluble lubricant, and a catheter (#16 French, about 5 inches long). You may also have on hand an anesthetic lubricant such as 'lidocaine jelly'. **Do not use petroleum jelly or Vaseline!**
2. Wash your hands, then assume a comfortable position in bed or on the toilet. If you are in bed, place a towel under your hips to protect the bedding.
3. Wash the urinary meatus with a towelette or soapy washcloth. Then rinse with a wet washcloth.
4. Apply water-soluble lubricant to the insertion end of the catheter. Lubricate about one inch of tubing. Use a water soluble lubricant such as *KY Jelly* or *Lubafax*. Do not use petroleum jelly or Vaseline!
5. Use your nondominant hand to separate the labia. Until you are used to the technique you will need to locate the **urinary meatus** (urethral opening) by using a mirror or by feeling for the clitoris and using it as a landmark. The urinary meatus is just below the clitoris.
6. Hold the catheter in your dominant hand and insert it into the urinary meatus, directing it upward and forward toward the **umbilicus** (belly button) until the urine flows freely.
7. Hold the catheter in place until the bladder has been drained. When the urine flow begins to taper off, slowly withdraw the catheter. (As you do, you may note an increase in urine flow as urine pockets are drained.)
8. Remove the catheter. Wash it in warm, soapy water, and rinse it thoroughly. Then air-dry it and store it in a dry paper or cloth towel until you need it again. Store the catheter in a rolled up towel or facecloth, a toothbrush holder, or anywhere that is convenient. Have a catheter with you at all times. Keep one at school, at work, and one in the car, too. It is more important to catheterize on schedule than to worry about catheter cleanliness. A quick rinse with soap and water before use will do. At the end of one week, discard the catheter. However, if it becomes hard to clean before then, use a new one.

9. Look at the urine for changes. If you see any change in color or odor or if the urine appears cloudy, contact your nurse or doctor. Also call if you have:

- Bleeding.
- Sediment in the urine.
- Back or abdominal discomfort accompanied by a fever.
- Trouble passing the catheter.
- Increased discomfort when passing the catheter.

10. Catheterize periodically to maintain bladder volumes around 12 - 13 ounces (or a bit more than half a pint), which is the best volume for maintaining a healthy bladder and kidneys.

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