Condom Catheters

A condom catheter (also known as an external catheter), is a urine drainage system for men made of a condom attached to a drainage tube and bag. Several sizes, types and attachment methods are available.

Why do I need a condom catheter?
The main purpose is to protect against incontinence (unwanted urine leakage). After spinal cord injury, some people end up with a spastic bladder which may accidentally void from general physical activity, such as transfers, or irritation from clothing. Other people end up with a flaccid bladder which may accidentally void because of an overfull bladder, pressure on the abdomen, or even laughing. For some people, constant leaking of urine can be a problem. For others who have control of their bladder but weak hands, a condom catheter maybe convenient to avoid the need to adjust clothing. Condom catheters are safer and have a lower risk of infection than internal (Foley) catheters because a tube does not need to be placed in the bladder.

You will work with your nurse to:
1. Determine the appropriate condom and application method
2. Ensure good flow of urine without backflow
3. Learn how to take care of your skin and apply the condom correctly.

Finding the Appropriate Condom

Your nurse will work with you to try different sizes, models and application methods to find out what works best for you. A well fitting catheter keeps you dry and drains properly. Be patient – a period of trial and error is expected. There are a variety of options:

Material: Common materials include polyvinyl, or silicone. They are chosen based on price, available sizes and skin sensitivity.

Disposable: Single use condoms are the most common. They are designed to be changed every 24hrs, but can be left in place for up to 48 hours.

Size: A variety of sizes are available and it is important to choose a size that fits properly. Manufacturers provide sizing charts, but it may be necessary to try different sizes to find the right fit. A condom catheter that is too small may cause skin problems. If the catheter you choose is too large it may leak or come off when you don’t want it to.

Application Method: Many of today’s condom catheters are self-adhesive and if applied correctly require no other method to keep them in place. If the adhesive causes a skin reaction then there are different brands to try and also condoms with different methods of securing them such as a double sided adhesive strap that is applied around the base of the penis and a non-adhesive condom applied over the top.
Condom Catheters

Applying a condom catheter

1. Gather materials
   - Correct sized condom catheter
   - Urinary collection bag (leg bag with straps or night bag)
   - Extension tubing
   - Baby wipes or soapy washcloths with towel
   - Optional items depending on your specific model and method
     - Skin barrier wipe
     - Scissors and/or safety razor
     - Adhesive
     - Disposable gloves

   **Safety Note:** When using any new type of condom for the first time on your penis, make sure you check for any kind of allergic reaction.

2. Prepare skin
   - Wash your hands.
   - If necessary, trim or shave any pubic hair surrounding the base of the penis.
   - Wash your penis with soapy washcloth or wet wipes. Rinse and dry.
   - Check the skin of the penis for redness, cuts and/or open areas. Notify your nurse or health care professional if you see a problem as you may need treatment to prevent urine from causing further damage to your skin.
   - Remove the condom from the package.

   **Note:** Never leave the foreskin pulled back after performing hygiene care as it will constrict the penis causing swelling.

3. Apply condom
   Some condom catheters have internal adhesives (the inside is sticky) and others have external adhesives. Make sure you follow the manufacturer directions.
   - Self Adhesive (Self Sealing): If using a skin barrier wipe this should be applied first to the skin of the penis and allowed to dry before the condom is applied.
   - External Adhesive: Using the manufacturer’s strap and instructions, wrap the shaft of the penis with elastic adhesive.

   Place the condom on the tip of the penis. Gently stretch your penis as you unroll the condom smoothly down the shaft, making sure there is 1-2 inches between the tip of the penis and the draining end of the condom. Be sure both sides of the condom unroll evenly and at the same time.

   When the condom is completely unrolled, gently squeeze it around the base of your penis for about 15 seconds to make sure that it sticks. The warmth of your hand will help the adhesive to stick well.

Contact your Nurse for more information.

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Client Name: Date given: SEL-BLA01
Condom Catheters

4. Check the condom catheter
   - The condom should be firmly secured so that it is snug and stays on. If it is too tight, it can prevent blood flow and result in complications.
   - Check the catheter over the course of the day to make sure there is a proper seal, good drainage, and that your penis is not getting irritated. More frequent checks may be required if you are doing activities that might loosen it such as transfers or exercises.

5. Position drainage bag
   - If using extension tubing, make sure it has been measured and cut to the correct length to allow for movement during walking or transfer. You want to prevent tension on the condom which could cause it to come off accidentally.
   - Connect one end of the tubing to the connector tip of the condom and the other end to the drainage bag. Make sure the condom is not twisted!
   - Keep the tubing kink free and the drainage bag positioned below the level of the bladder to prevent backflow of urine.
   - Use leg straps to attach leg bag. Check leg straps for tightness and skin color for circulation from time to time.
   - A thigh strap can be used if necessary to secure the extension tubing and prevent pulling on the condom.
   - Empty the drainage bag by pulling open the lever at the bottom of the bag when it is half full. Most leg bags can hold 1000 mL and night bags can hold 2000 mL.

Removing a condom catheter
Most of the time, condoms can be rolled off easily. If you are having a difficult time removing it, you can use a damp, warm wash cloth to help loosen the adhesive.

Procedure
1. Grasp the edge of the condom near the base of the penis and carefully pull the condom off the penis.
2. If a lot of resistance is present, particularly if the condom is only recently applied, then wrap a damp cloth around condom.
3. Hold the wash cloth in position for a minute or so. Gently attempt to remove the condom again. Repeat this step as many times as necessary. Do not pull condom off since this could cause skin irritation and breakdown.
4. To remove the drainage bag, clamp the tube closed. Release the leg straps, and disconnect the extension tubing at the top of the bag.
5. Check skin on the penis’ shaft for signs of irritation, swelling or discoloration.

Safety note: When removing your condom, use a warm, NOT hot, wash cloth in order to prevent burns

Contact your Nurse for more information.
**Trouble shooting your Condom Catheter**

- **Penis irritation:** Redness or peeling of skin could be due to rubbing of the condom against the penis. Your condom or adhesive may be too tight. Consider getting a larger size or reapply the adhesive less tightly. Your body may also be responding to the adhesive or type of material of the condom e.g. latex. Consider trying a different brand of adhesive.

- **Skin breakdown:** If you develop cuts or sores on your penis, you should stop wearing a condom catheter and see your health care professional immediately. You may need to use other methods of bladder management like intermittent catheterization or indwelling catheterization until your skin heals.

- **Pooling of urine:** Urine that builds up inside the condom instead of draining out can result in a urinary tract infection or skin breakdown. When applying the condom, make sure to leave only 1-2 inches between the tip of the penis and the draining end of the condom. Make sure the adhesive is attached spirally and not circularly. Also make sure there is no kink in the drainage tubing.

- **Low urine output:** If you notice that urine is not draining in adequate quantities, you may have to do an intermittent catheterization to void. If there is still no drainage, contact your health care professional.

- **Penis swelling or discoloration:** If the condom or adhesive strap is applied too tight, or if you leave the foreskin retracted, this may cause swelling and discoloration.

- **Leaking urine:** If the condom catheter you choose is too large it may leak. You can pinch the adhesive on the condom so that urine cannot leak around the seal.

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**Good personal hygiene to ensure cleanliness, and drying or airing of the genital area is essential to avoid complications.**

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**Notes:**

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Cleaning your Drainage bag

Cleaning your drainage bag is a common way to prolong the life of your bag and prevent infection. Two commonly used cleaning solutions are available to be mixed at home. Use one of these solutions to clean your drainage bag:

1. **Bleach Recipe (diluted 5.25% sodium hypochlorite)**
   - 1 part bleach to 10 parts tap water
   - 1 tablespoon (15 ml) of bleach + 2/3 cup (150 ml) of tap water

2. **Vinegar Recipe (0.25% Acetic Acid)**
   - 1 part vinegar to 3 parts water
   - ½ cup (125 ml) of vinegar + 1 ½ cup (375 ml) of tap water

**Procedure**

1. Wash your hands.
2. Disconnect the drainage bag from your catheter.
3. Empty urine from the bag into the toilet.
4. Fill the bag with 200 mL of cold tap water by using a plastic squirt bottle through the connector for leg bags or through the top tubing for night bags.
5. Shake the water in the bag vigorously while counting slowly to ten.
6. Empty the water out through the bag’s drainage spout into the toilet
7. Repeat steps 4 to 6. **Rinsing must be done twice.**
8. Using a plastic squirt bottle or funnel, put approximately 30 ml or 2 tablespoons (1oz) of the premixed cleaning solution into the bag.
9. Shake the bag well to make sure that the cleaning solution touches the entire inner surface of the bag.
10. Drain the cleaning solution into the toilet.
11. Rinse the bag with tap water (steps 4 to 6).
12. Hang the bag on a hook and allow to air dry until the next use.

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**Example of a night bag**

**Example of a leg bag**