

How to Care for Your Urinary Catheter Drainage Bag

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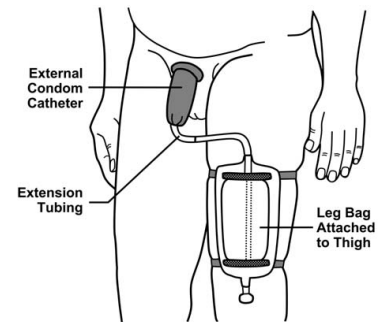
What Is a Drainage Bag?

Your indwelling (Foley) or external (condom) catheter will be connected to a drainage bag that will collect the urine that drains from your bladder. There are three types of drainage bags:

1. An **overnight drainage bag** is used during the night. It is connected to your catheter by a long tube. It holds 1½ to 2 quarts of urine. These bags come in different sizes (horizontal or vertical) and are made from a variety of materials (vinyl, latex, and rubber). The bag is usually hung over the side of the bed, on a chair, but always below the level of your bladder, so that the urine will drain easily.



2. A **leg drainage bag** is a smaller collection bag for use at home during the day or when you go out of your house. The leg bag can be strapped to your leg (thigh or calf) or held in place with a net sleeve or stocking. It is easy to hide under your clothing. The leg straps should be wrapped around your leg, with the bottom strap below your knee. Do not make the straps too tight because this could slow the blood flow to your leg. Take care of the leg bag in the same way as the overnight drainage bag.



3. A **stomach bag** is worn at the waist and is called a "Belly Bag." The bag fastens around your stomach by a belt with a release buckle. A one-way valve keeps the urine from backing up. The bag is emptied by a drain tube with a twist valve. This bag has a soft backing that is next to your skin.

Emptying Your Drainage Bag

You should empty your drainage bag at least every 4 hours or when it is halfway filled. There are different types of drainage ports or taps that you open to drain the urine. Some twist off, others are a flip-flow valve or a sliding type. Make sure you can open and close the port correctly before going home.

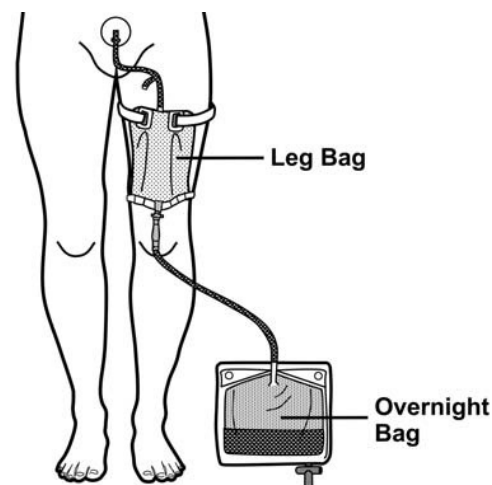
How to Position Your Drainage Bag

If you are using an overnight or leg bag, the position of your drainage bag is important. You must have good drainage to prevent "backflow" of urine. Urine must always drain "downhill," so keep the urine drainage bag below the level of the bladder at all times. This allows the urine to drain by gravity and will prevent it from flowing back into the bladder. As the drainage bag fills with urine,

it becomes heavy and could pull on your catheter or drag uncomfortably if not supported. You can support the overnight bag by hooking it on a hanger attached to the bed frame. If you are using a Belly Bag, it should be strapped around your stomach.

How to Disconnect or Change Your Drainage Bag

Pinch the catheter tubing between your fingers, above the drainage bag connection, to stop the flow of urine. Using a twisting motion, disconnect the tubing and bag from the catheter. Take an alcohol-soaked pad and clean the end of the new tubing and the connection site of the catheter. Insert the new tubing into the catheter. Using an alcohol-soaked pad, clean the end of the tubing that was removed and replace the protective cap. Save caps to drainage bags to cover ends of tubing when not in use.



How to Clean Your Drainage Bag

Drainage bags can be cleaned and deodorized by filling the bag with a mixture of 1 part vinegar and 3 parts water, then letting it soak for 20 minutes. After cleaning the bag, wash it with soap and water and dry the bag by hanging it with the emptying spout pointing down. Do not hang the bag over the heat of an oven or radiator, as it will melt. When dry, recap the bag until ready for reuse. If your bag starts to wear out, becomes discolored, stiff, or falls apart, get a new bag. To avoid infections, clean the bag every 5 to 7 days and use a new bag at least twice a month.

What if I Get an Infection?

If you get repeated bladder infections, spasms, and pain, you may be told by your nurse or doctor not to disconnect the catheter from the bag. Then you should use only the overnight drainage bag. Call your doctor or nurse if you have questions or problems.

Adapted from: Newman, D. K. and A. J. Wein. (2009). "Urinary Collection and Management Products." *Managing and Treating Urinary Incontinence*, 2nd ed. Health Professions Press; Baltimore, MD.



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