


Self-Catheterization in Everyday Life



Anthony*
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A photograph of two women sitting at a desk in a home office. The woman on the left has blonde hair and is wearing a white cardigan over a light purple top. The woman on the right has long dark hair and is wearing a grey cardigan over a black top. They are both smiling and looking at each other. A professional microphone is on the desk in front of them. In the background, there is a potted plant, a printer, and a blue bag hanging on the wall.


Shailynn*
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Welcome to Self-Catheterization in Everyday Life

At Coloplast we understand that catheterization is not always easy. This resource is designed to help you gain knowledge and strategies, as well as feel confident about self-catheterization at home, at work, or on the go!

This guide explores important aspects of self-catheterization in daily life, providing essential insights into the importance of the bladder's function and how to develop a routine. From maintaining good hygiene to addressing urinary tract infections and the importance of proper hydration, this guide is designed to help you learn to incorporate self-catheterization into your work routine, physical activities, and intimate moments as a catheter user.

Everyone is different, and figuring out what works best for you is key!



Leanne*
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The importance of self-catheterization

Self-catheterization is needed when you can no longer empty your bladder spontaneously by urinating (retention), or if you can no longer empty your bladder completely (residual urine).

Emptying your bladder regularly may help lessen many kinds of serious problems. Leaving too much urine in the bladder for too long may result in an infection.¹ The urine can flow back into the kidneys, putting pressure on the kidneys and possibly damaging them. In addition, the kidneys must work hard to drain the urine (back pressure), which may also cause harm.

Benefits of self-catheterization

Self-catheterization may help keep your bladder healthy by reducing the risk of short and long-term complications^{2,3}. It also has other benefits, such as potentially giving you more control over your bladder, and increasing your independence and self-confidence. With self-catheterization, you are in charge of your bladder; you can plan your day and decide when to empty your bladder.



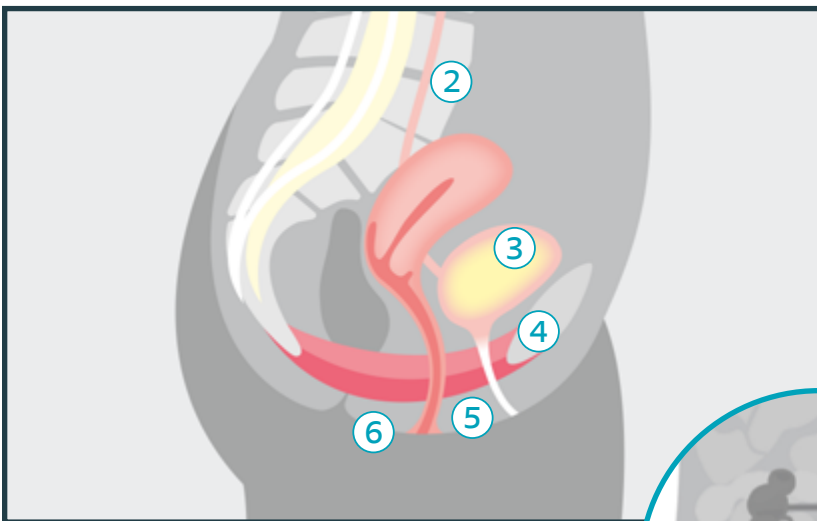
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The function of the bladder

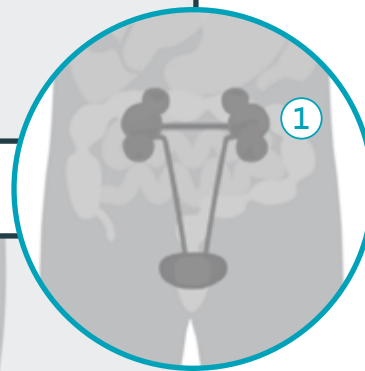
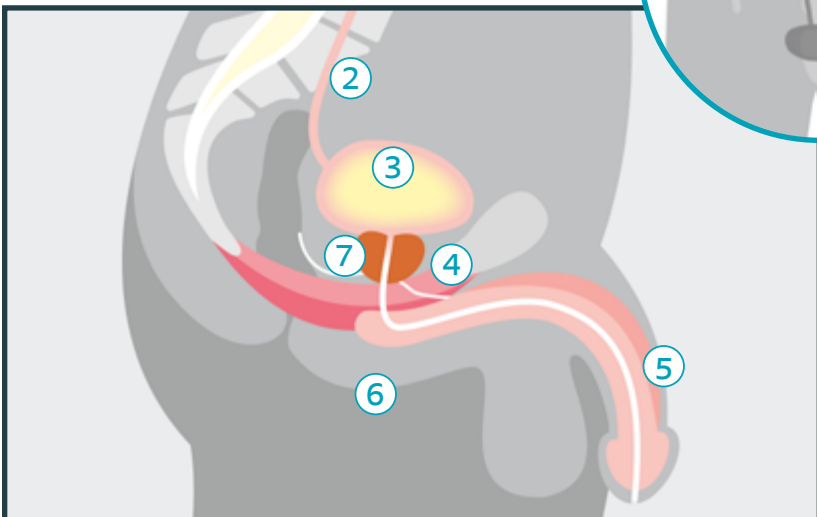
The kidneys produce urine by purifying the blood of waste products. Urine is drained into the bladder through the ureters. The frequency of this occurrence varies from person to person. The urethra is responsible for carrying urine out of the body from the bladder. Whether or not the urine flows depends on the sphincter muscles, and the pelvic floor muscles play a role in helping the sphincter muscles open and close.

Anatomy of the bladder

Female anatomy:



Male anatomy:



1. Kidney
2. Ureter
3. Bladder
4. Sphincters
5. Urethra
6. Pelvic floor muscles
7. Prostate

Develop a routine that fits into your daily life

It can take time to get used to self-catheterizing. With the help of your healthcare provider and some patience, you will learn the technique that works best for you. It is important to make self-catheterization a part of your daily routine.

Some recommendations that could help you with this:

✓ **Set an alarm to remind you:**

Setting an alarm (on your phone or watch, for example) can help remind you to catheterize. It may also help you get used to regular catheterization!

✓ **Stick to the number of catheterizations as recommended by your healthcare professional**

Your healthcare professional may adjust the number of times you need to catheterize according to your individual situation. It is important to always follow their guidance.

✓ **Empty your bladder completely**

It is very important to empty your bladder completely every time you catheterize. Urine left in the bladder may cause infections. It can be helpful, especially if you are just starting to catheterize, to measure how much urine you empty daily. If you feel that there is a change in the amount of urine, please get in touch with your healthcare professional.

✓ **Go out, but don't forget to empty your bladder**

Keeping up with your self-catheterization routine is just as important when you go out as it is when you're at home. Plan your day ahead so you can fit catheterization between activities. Consider what may be a good time for you to catheterize, such as before going to the mall, movies, museum visits, and so on.

✓ **Always make sure you have enough catheters**

Always take enough catheters with you when you leave home so that you can empty your bladder at all times.

[Click here to explore articles by Coloplast® Care on establishing effective routines as a catheter user.](#)



Good hygiene for a healthy bladder

Hygiene is very important in catheterization, because it can help minimize the risk of infections⁴.

Wash your hands carefully

Water and soap are fine for cleaning your hands before your catheterization. If you are somewhere where there is no water, you can use antibacterial wipes or hand gel.

[Click here to download our hand washing guide.](#)

Clean the area around the opening of the urethra

Do this from front to back and using only water or water and soap⁴. Dry with a towel. Discuss with your healthcare provider the best method to clean your pubic area before catheterization⁴. After washing your hands, do not touch anything other than your catheter and the body parts you need to touch in order to catheterize.

How often can I use my catheter?

Use a new, sterile catheter every time you catheterize. This may help reduce urinary tract infections⁴. If your catheter accidentally falls on the floor before you can use it, use a new sterile catheter. Canadian urologists and nurses recommend single-use intermittent catheters, ideally those that are hydrophilic or pre-lubricated⁴. In fact, Canadian nurses no longer support the re-use of intermittent catheters at all⁴.

Reusing catheters may lead to a change of physical properties of the catheter material and there is a risk of introducing unnecessary bacteria contamination, which may result in urinary tract infections (UTIs).

[Click here to learn more about why it is important to only use your catheter once!](#)

What is a urinary tract infection?


The best-known **urinary tract infection** is a **bladder infection**; it is caused by bacteria getting into your bladder. In most cases, the bacteria enter your bladder through the urethra. In the bladder, the bacteria float in the urine or become attached to the bladder wall and multiply there. An **upper urinary tract infection** can happen when the bacteria in the bladder end up in the kidneys, because the bladder and kidneys are connected.

If the immune system fails to remove the bacteria from the body and you start to have symptoms of a urinary tract infection, you may need an antibiotic treatment. Self-catheterization increases the risk of urinary tract infection; on average, **catheter users get 2.7 urinary tract infections yearly⁵**. This is why using a new, sterile catheter every time you catheterize is so important!


What catheter users told us:

81% indicate that not having UTIs points to a healthy bladder⁶

Users have, on average,
2.7
UTIs per year⁵



UTIs are a daily concern for
41%
of catheter users⁶



45% consider having a UTI one of the biggest problems in their lives⁶

UTI = Urinary tract infection

How do you know if you have a urinary tract infection?

Recognizing a UTI is important because left untreated, it can be harmful to the bladder, kidneys, and spread to other parts of your body. Some symptoms are more obvious than others. Be aware of symptoms that are more subtle and therefore harder to spot!

Symptoms that may be related to urinary tract infection¹:



Fever, sweating, or chills



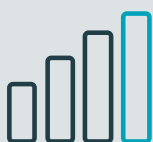
Pain in the pubic area (bladder) or lower back (kidneys)



Pain or discomfort when urinating



Chills and increased spasms in the body and bladder
In spinal cord injury: increasing spasms in the body.



More frequent small amounts of urination



Dark-coloured (due to insufficient fluid intake) and **strong-smelling** urine (not caused by foods that can lead to a different odour to the urine)



Increased urge to urinate or unexpected urine loss



Blood in the urine (blood may cause the colour of urine to change from pale pink to red)

How can you check if you have a urinary tract infection?

Visit your healthcare provider if you think you may have a UTI. Your healthcare provider may perform a urinalysis to check your urine for the type and amount of bacteria and assess you for signs and symptoms of a UTI. If you suffer from recurrent UTIs, your healthcare provider may want to test for underlying conditions.

Want to learn more about UTI's and reducing the risk of them occurring? [Click here to download our Understanding Urinary Tract Infections eBook.](#)

Reducing the probability of urinary tract infections

There are a number of precautions you can take to help minimize the risk of recurrent urinary tract infections:

1. Drink 6–8 glasses (1.5–2 litres) of fluid per day⁷

Drink plenty of fluids (provided you do not have a medical condition that requires you to restrict fluid intake). Consult your healthcare provider if you are unsure.

2. Maintain good personal hygiene

Always wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water. If you don't, bacteria can enter the urinary tract through the catheter.¹ Also, before the catheterization, carefully clean the opening around the urethra with clean water or as instructed by your healthcare provider.

3. Empty your bladder regularly and completely, as recommended by your healthcare professional

Emptying the bladder completely each time with catheterization drains the urine from the bladder and, with that, the bacteria. If urine remains, bacteria may also remain.

4. Always use a new sterile catheter

We recommend you use a new, sterile catheter with a hydrophilic coating every time you catheterize. Coloplast's hydrophilic catheters are ready to use right out of the package, may increase comfort, and can help reduce risk of urethral trauma.

[Click here to discover how Triple Action Coating Technology™ can minimize the risk of UTIs and harming your urethra when compared to uncoated catheters.](#)



Measure the amount of urine you pass from time to time. It should not be more than about 500 ml⁸. If it is more than 500 ml discuss with your health care professional whether you might need to catheterize more frequently.



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Why is it important to drink enough?

If you experience bladder issues, you may feel less inclined to drink a lot of water. In reality, drinking too little can actually worsen symptoms. It may be better to manage the timing of your fluid intake and washroom visits to give you better control.

How much should you drink?

Drinking enough fluids can help flush out bacteria. Water is best, but water in foods like certain fruits and juices, ideally diluted with equal parts water to reduce sugar content, count toward part of the fluid requirement. However, avoid caffeinated, carbonated, and energy drinks. For most people, 6–8 glasses (1.5–2 litres) of fluid daily is enough unless you are sweating and/or exercising, you may need more water, or if your healthcare provider advises otherwise.

Tip: Fill one or more bottles with water and put them in plain sight or store them in the fridge. That way, you know you have reached the daily amount when they are all empty.

Exercising and travel

When you travel or exercise, you may have a tendency to drink less because you are afraid of bladder leakage or you don't want to catheterize outside of your home. However, it is important to stay hydrated by drinking enough water.

If you travel through countries with warm climates or if you sweat (a lot) while exercising, you are at risk of dehydration if you do not drink enough. Insufficient hydration can also contribute to constipation which may impact your overall health and the well-being of your bladder.

Choosing the right catheter

Finding a catheter that fits your lifestyle can be crucial for safely and effectively emptying your bladder without any issues. When discussing your product choice with your healthcare provider, also discuss your lifestyle, concerns, special needs, and so on.

Keep the following considerations in mind when choosing a catheter:

- That the catheter is easy to use, even if you have reduced hand function or are in a wheelchair.
- How the catheter can fit into your life and activities, for example, work, sports, travel, etc.
- Whether you need more than one solution: one for home and another for going out.

Needs and wants may change over time

Many changes can happen in your life at any time. Your body could change, for example, because of weight loss or gain. You may become more active, participate in outdoor activities, return to work, look after dependents, and so on. A different catheter may suit you better at different points in your life. Don't be afraid to try different products until you find the one that is right for you.



Brianna*
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Do you need help in selecting the ideal catheter for your needs?

Reach out to a Coloplast Care Advisor today! Our care team is here to help you discover the perfect product solution for your needs.



casupport@coloplast.com



1 (866) 293-6349

Information from Coloplast® Care is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to substitute for professional medical advice and should not be interpreted to contain treatment recommendations. You should rely on the health care professional who knows your individual history for personal medical advice and diagnosis.

Self-catheterization at work

Your self-catheterization routine should fit your work schedule, and should not have a negative impact on your workday. It should not have to take longer than a regular washroom visit.

Here are some recommendations for self-catheterizing at work:

Schedule your catheterizations

During your work day, you can use your regular breaks to catheterize, such as before meetings or during lunch or coffee breaks.

Bring enough materials with you

Make sure you bring enough catheters to work every day. Keep extras at your desk if you need to. Compact catheters can fit easily into your pocket or purse and are discreet. It may be a good idea to take a bag with essentials like extra clothes with you to the washroom in case you experience leakage.

Do not drink too much coffee and other caffeinated drinks

If you are at work, then you may be used to drinking coffee throughout the day, but try to limit this. This also applies to other caffeinated drinks (such as black tea or cola), as they make you go to the washroom more often. You should still drink 1.5–2 litres of fluid daily, but keep track of how much you drink at work so you can plan catheterizations accordingly.

Travelling for work

Even if you're comfortable with self-catheterization, there may still be tricky situations to handle. For instance, going on long business trips or working away from the office. With good products and consistent planning, you can achieve more than you think.



Mirko*
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Leanne*
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Exercising as a catheter user

Some physical activities may cause you to leak or feel the urge to go to the washroom more often. However, this does not mean you should avoid exercise, as it is important for your wellbeing.

Here are some tips for staying active as a catheter user:

Stick to your catheterization schedule

Plan your washroom visits before exercising. Set a reminder for yourself, on your phone, for example.

Catheterize before you start exercising

Catheterize just before you start because then you run the least risk of urine loss.

Don't forget to drink

You may be tempted to avoid catheterizations by drinking less, but that's not a good idea. Especially when you exercise or when it is hot, you should drink more to replace the lost fluid.

Use of the pelvic floor

For short-term abdominal pressure-increasing moments, such as lifting or coughing, it can help to tighten the pelvic floor beforehand and release it afterwards. Pelvic floor physiotherapists are healthcare providers that can help you train your pelvic floor if needed.

[Click here to download our Exercise for Catheter Users guide.](#)

Self-catheterization and intimacy

Having the confidence to enjoy intimacy

Intimacy and intercourse are a natural part of life that doesn't need to change when you use catheters. Before having sex, make sure you catheterize so that the bladder is completely emptied to avoid urine loss. A little planning and communication before intimacy can help you focus less on your bladder.

A positive self-image is important for enjoying intimacy. This is especially important if your body has changed recently or if the way you are able to have sex looks different from before. Remember to have open communication with your partner. Talking about your concerns and giving your partner space to share their thoughts can help you both relax.

[Click here to watch our pre-recorded webinar on sex and intimacy for catheter users.](#)

Brianna*

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A day or weekend away

Self-catheterization should not stop you from going out and enjoying a day trip or weekend away! It is important to plan well in advance and make any necessary arrangements beforehand.

Here are some tips for a successful trip:

Schedule your catheterizations

It might be tempting to skip catheterization when you are visiting somewhere for the first time or are with people who know nothing about your condition. However, this can lead to leakage and may be harmful to your bladder.

- Catheterize just before leaving the house.
- Arrange your catheterization breaks at a convenient time during the day.
- Set an alarm on your phone or watch to remind you.



Brittney*
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Research available washrooms

Research in advance, if you can, the available washrooms at the place you are going to. This is especially important if you are in a wheelchair. View them on the internet or call for more information about how the washroom is set up.

Make a bladder emergency kit

When you are outside the safe area of your home, it is good to know that you have everything you could possibly need with you.

What we recommend to include:



Intermittent catheters
(3 to 5 days extra from
what you have already
packed)



Hygiene wipes
and toilet paper



Lubrication if required
for uncoated catheters



Medications



Antibacterial gel
or hand wipes



Bladder pads, pull-up,
or extra undergarments



Gloves



Create a document containing:
your doctors' name and contact
information, your medical supplier,
the name of your catheter and item
number, a list of your medications

Customize your bladder emergency kit to the items you use and consider essential.

Incontinence pads or not?

Are you afraid of leaking urine? Then wear incontinence pads for extra safety until you feel more comfortable or during outings. If you occasionally lose urine between self-catheterizations, you can wear an incontinence pad for extra safety and security.

[Click here to explore Coloplast® Care articles about travelling for catheters users. Theses articles cover topics such as preparing for travel, packing tips, user stories, and proper catheter storage.](#)



Travelling as a catheter user

With proper preparation, you can enjoy your holiday with peace of mind and relaxation. If you are well prepared, bladder problems should not interfere with your travel plans.

Below are some tips to help you prepare for your trip:

Use a travel card to explain your products to security

Remember some catheterization products contain a liquid. Ask your health care provider for a list of products you use, so you can carry your catheters, lubricants if needed, or antibacterial hand gel in your carry on. [Or click here to request a Coloplast Travel Card!](#) The travel card provides information to security personnel at the airport about your condition and the medical supplies you are carrying.

Catheterize before boarding

Make sure to catheterize as soon as possible before boarding, for example, at the airport. On long-haul flights, you may need to catheterize on the plane. If you can, ask for an aisle seat close to the washroom. Always try all solutions at home first, so you are used to the new product before travelling.

Take plenty of products with you

Bring an ample supply of items, and ensure you pack all the necessary accessories for your catheterization routine. Place essentials in both checked baggage and hand luggage in case you need to transfer or if your luggage is delayed or lost. If going to the washroom is difficult, take a catheter kit or extra urine collection bag with you.

Compact catheters

If you do not use compact catheters, you may want to try them out before your trip to see if they are a good solution for you! The compact packaging can save a lot of space in your suitcase, backpack, or travel bag. There are also compact catheters in sturdy packaging so that they are better protected against damage when they are loose in your bag.

[Click here to download our Travel Guide for Catheter Users.](#)



A man with a beard and glasses, wearing a dark jacket and dark pants, is sitting in a black motorized wheelchair. He is positioned at a wooden table in a cafe-like setting with white subway tiles on the wall and wooden shelves. On the table, there is a glass of water and a plate with food. He is smiling at the camera.

Anthony*
User | Continance Care

Embracing self-catheterization in your everyday life

Using an intermittent catheter should not keep you from living your life. The insights shared in this guide are designed to make each step manageable whether you are at work, during physical activities, intimate moments, or while traveling.

Try to exercise patience and kindness towards yourself as you navigate your journey with self-catheterization. This guide is designed to help self-catheterization become a routine integrated in your everyday life!

Please contact your health care provider with any health-related concerns or issues. Also, don't hesitate to contact **Coloplast® Care** for any product or lifestyle questions at **1-866-293-6349** or email us at **casupport@Coloplast.com**.

[Click here to find more resources for catheter users!](#)

[If you would like to learn about our users and read their stories, click here!](#)

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Information and help

Coloplast® Care

You can get help from a Coloplast Care Advisor!
We are available from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm (EST) at:

1-866-293-6349

www.coloplastcare.ca

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*Users have received compensation from Coloplast to share their information.

