

# Suprapubic Catheter Care

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Your child has a suprapubic catheter, which drains the bladder.

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## What is a suprapubic (SP) catheter?

An SP catheter is a tube that carries your child's pee (urine) from the bladder to a bag for disposal. This tube comes out through a small hole in your child's stomach (suprapubic means above the pubic or genital area).

Your child may need an SP catheter for:

- Leakage (urinary incontinence)
  - Not being able to pee (urinary retention)
  - Surgery or another health problem
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## How do I care for the catheter?

Keep all parts of the drainage system including the tube very clean to prevent infection. To clean the area where the catheter enters your child's body, follow these steps:

1. Wash your hands with soap and water. You do not need to wear gloves.
2. Wash the catheter where it leaves the body every day with soap and warm water. You can do it in the shower or a shallow bath if the water line is below the catheter. Do not pull on the catheter.
3. Inspect the skin at least once a day. Skin appearing slightly red, dark brown, gray or purple and clear drainage are normal.
4. If there is dried blood or mucous on the catheter that does not come off with soap and water, pour a little hydrogen peroxide on a cotton ball or gauze pad, then gently wipe the catheter.
5. Rinse the skin and catheter with warm water. Pat dry with a towel.
6. You can cover the catheter site with a bandage (dressing). It is not required.
7. Keep the catheter secured to your child's belly (using tape, Tegaderm or catheter holder) to prevent it from being pulled out.
8. Wash your hands with soap and water.

### To Learn More

- Urology  
206-987-2509
- Ask your child's healthcare provider
- [seattlechildrens.org](http://seattlechildrens.org)

### Free Interpreter Services

- In the hospital, ask your nurse.
- From outside the hospital, call the toll-free Family Interpreting Line, 1-866-583-1527. Tell the interpreter the name or extension you need.

### How do I care for the drainage bag?

- We may give you 2 different types of drainage bags, 1 for day and 1 for night.
- Keep the drainage system below the level of the bladder so the pee (urine) does not back up.
- Keep the drainage bag off the floor.
- The bag should be emptied when 2/3 full or at least every 8 hours.
- A leg bag will allow your child to wear regular clothes and be free to play or work during the day. Remember that because it is small, you will need to empty it often. Use a larger drainage bag for overnight.
- Be sure there are no sharp bends (kinks) in the tubing that may prevent pee draining from the bladder to the bag.

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### How do I change the drainage bag?

If you change drainage bags home, a nurse will show you how to follow these steps:

1. Wash your hands with soap and water.
2. Disconnect the tubing from the catheter.
3. Insert the new drainage bag tubing into the catheter.
4. If you are going to reuse the bag, cover the connection site with a sterile cap or gauze. Keep the bag in a clean place.
5. Change the drainage bag once a week or sooner if it becomes dirty or smelly.

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### How do I clean the drainage bag?

1. Make a bleach solution (4 parts water to 1 part bleach).
2. Soak the bag for at least 2 hours.
3. Rinse with water.
4. Dry and store on a clean towel.
5. Replace the bag if there is a hole or if it is more than 30 days old.

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### What if the doctor asks me to drain the catheter into a diaper?

If your child is not potty trained, your doctor might instruct you to drain the catheter into a “double diaper.” The double diaper technique keeps the catheter clean and allows it to continuously drain. Your child’s nurse will show you how to do this. To double diaper:

- Your child will wear a normal sized diaper on the inside.
- On the outside, your child will wear a diaper 1 size larger.
- The catheter will drain into the outer diaper, so the catheter does not get soiled if your child has pooped.

### How do I irrigate the catheter?

Irrigating a catheter means you flush salt water (saline) or sterile water into the bladder through the catheter with a syringe. This rinses the catheter and bladder and allows the catheter to drain more easily.

- Your child's nurse will show you how to irrigate the catheter, and soon you will be able to do this on your own.
- Always wash your hands with soap and water before and after touching the catheter.
- Disconnect the catheter from the drainage bag.
- Put a sterile top or gauze over the open end of the drainage bag until ready to reconnect to the catheter.
- Slowly push 15 mL of saline or sterile water with a clean piston syringe. Pull back slowly until you see pee.
- We may ask you to repeat this 2 or 3 times in a row and several times per day.

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### How do I change the catheter?

For directions on how to change the catheter at home, read our handout "Changing Your Suprapubic Catheter."  
[seattlechildrens.org/pdf/PE2041.pdf](https://seattlechildrens.org/pdf/PE2041.pdf)

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### How do I get the supplies?

We will give you 3 days of supplies when you go home from the hospital. To get more supplies:

- We will tell you what supplies you need and help you find a medical supply company that accepts your insurance.
- We will give you a prescription for the supplies.
- If you are running low on supplies, order them directly from your medical supply company.

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### What happens after the catheter is removed?



- The small hole where the catheter comes out should close within 48 hours.
- You can put a gauze pad over it if urine leaks during this time. Replace the gauze if it is soiled.
- Your child may shower or take a shallow bath (if the water line is below the catheter) 24 hours after catheter removal.
- No swimming for 48 hours after catheter removal.

### When should I call the doctor?

Monday to Friday, call the Urology Clinic at **206-987-2509** for questions or concerns listed below. Send MyChart messages for non-urgent questions.

Nights, weekends and holidays, call **206-987-2000** and ask for the urology resident on call.

- The catheter comes out unexpectedly
  - The catheter stops draining pee
  - The SP exit site is very red, dark brown, gray or purple or has smelly drainage
  - A large amount of pee is leaking around the catheter, like a steady flow (a small amount of leaking is normal, like a few drops)
  - Your child has pain in their stomach area or back, not relieved with medicine
  - Your child has nausea or vomiting
  - Your child shows signs of a urinary tract infection, such as:
    - Fever of 101.5° F (38.6° C) or chills
    - Irritability
    - Smelly, cloudy or bloody pee
    - Wetting accidents if otherwise potty trained
  - Your child has not peed for 8 hours after removing the catheter
  - You are unable to insert a new catheter when changing it
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