

# CLEAN INTERMITTENT SELF-CATHETERISATION



the women's  
the royal women's hospital  
victoria australia

This factsheet is for women who are patients of the Women's and have been advised to use clean intermittent self-catheterisation (CISC) to help empty their bladder.

## Helping you to empty your bladder

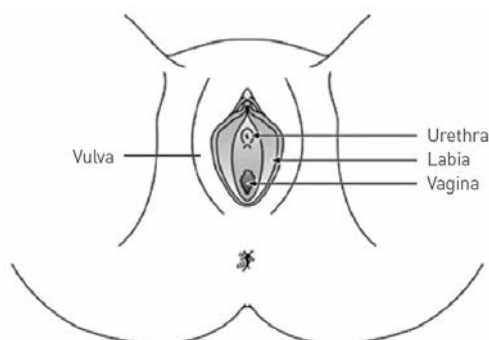
Your bladder is not emptying properly. A number of things may have caused this problem for you including:

- a medical condition
- an operation you may have had
- having a baby.

Regardless of the cause, it is very important that you have help to empty your bladder as soon as possible. The inability to empty your bladder (partially or completely) can be very serious. It may lead to urinary tract infections or long-term damage to the bladder or kidneys. Poor bladder emptying can also cause pain or discomfort and symptoms like frequency (wanting to go to the toilet a lot) and urgency or dribbling urine.

**Clean intermittent self-catheterisation** or 'self-cath' is a way for you to empty your bladder using a fine, soft catheter. Research shows that this kind of catheter is more successful in restoring your bladder so that it is emptying normally.

In some cases, an indwelling catheter is used first – this might remain in the bladder for several days before the CISC.



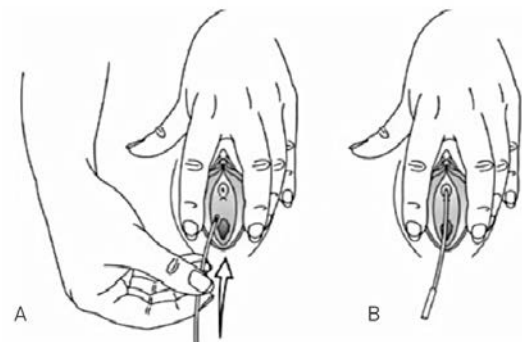
## How to use a CISC

You will need:

- soap
- cotton balls or wash cloths
- catheter
- lubricant such as KY Jelly
- container to store the catheter (e.g. toothbrush box)
- mirror
- measuring jug or bowl.

To insert the catheter:

- collect equipment
- wash hands with soap and water
- wash vulva, wiping from front to back
- open labia with one hand and feel for urethra or use a mirror (see A below)
- with the other hand, gently insert the lubricated catheter until urine flows (4–6 cm) (see B below)
- when the flow stops, slowly remove the catheter
- rinse catheter in warm soapy water, shake dry and store in the toothbrush box.



## Other important information

- Use a clean catheter every time. If the catheter is accidentally dropped, goes into the vagina, or touches the toilet, use another one.
- Do not force the catheter into the urethra, always use lubricant.
- Find a position that suits you. This might be standing in front of the toilet or sitting on a chair or bed. Placing a foot on a raised surface may also help.
- Bath or shower daily in the usual manner.
- Drink six to eight glasses of fluid each day.
- Catheters can be disposed of in your normal garbage.

## Changing the catheter

Ask your nurse about the care of the catheter and how often you should change it. In general, you should not use the same catheter for more than one week.

If you have developed a urinary tract infection a new catheter should be used every time.

## When you are away from home

Carry extra catheters to use when you are out. You can store used catheters in a plastic ziplock bag and wash them when you get home. If you are travelling by air, carry your catheters in your hand luggage.

## How many times a day should you use a catheter

Your doctor or nurse will recommend how many times you should use your catheter each day. Most women start by using the catheter four times per day.

Your nurse might ask you to measure and record how much urine you pass naturally and then how much comes out with the catheter. This will help them to know how many times you will need to use the catheter.

## Be aware of signs of infection

It is quite rare, but sometimes using the catheter will cause infection. You should be aware of the signs of infection so that you can take action.

They are:

- high temperature
- burning urine
- frequency (wanting to urinate a lot)
- smelly or cloudy urine or passing blood
- you may notice small spots of blood on the catheter, this is normal, due to irritation from insertion. If you notice large amounts of blood however, you should talk to your doctor.

Contact your local doctor or the emergency department at the Royal Women's Hospital if you have any concerns.

If you experience complications after you leave hospital please see your local doctor or attend the Emergency Department at the Royal Women's Hospital or your closest emergency department.

## For more information and advice

### Urogynaecology Pelvic Floor Service

Continence Nurse Advisor

The Royal Women's Hospital

Tel: (03) 8345 2000