
Permanent Suprapubic Catheterisation in Women

Frequently Asked Questions

What determines whether a suprapubic or urethral catheter is chosen?

When an indwelling or long-term catheter to drain the bladder is advised, the question of whether this is best placed in the urethra (water pipe) or suprapubically (directly into the bladder through the skin over the bladder) arises.

A number of issues are considered in this question and these are set out below.

Some problems related to catheters probably occur equally often with urethral or suprapubic catheters. These include:

- ~ the risk of infection (or persistent carriage of bacteria in the urine)
- ~ the risk of catheter blockages
- ~ the risk of bladder spasms causing leakage of urine either around the catheter or via the urethra (water pipe) with suprapubic catheters.

In other words, neither sort of catheter has any advantage in respect of these problems.

What are the advantages of a suprapubic catheter?

The first and most obvious advantage of suprapubic catheters is that they are usually, but not always, significantly easier to change than urethral catheters. This is because the pathway from the skin to the bladder is usually straight, readily accessible, and short.

Whereas urethral catheters usually need to be changed by a District Nurse or a Doctor, it is much more likely that a nurse could change a suprapubic catheter.

Are there any other advantages?

A further advantage of suprapubic catheters for women is that the area round the urethra and the adjacent genitalia is not continually irritated by the presence of a catheter. This reduces soreness and discomfort.

Over a period of years, a urethral catheter can put pressure on the exit point of the water pipe from the urethra, and produce an enlargement in the size of the urethral passage. This can be a nuisance, but not more serious. What is more serious is that a similar enlargement can sometimes occur in the valve which holds urine in the bladder (the sphincter). If this occurs, leakage around the catheter may occur and this can be extremely difficult to treat.

In women who are sexually active, the absence of a urethral catheter is an obvious advantage.

How are suprapubic catheters inserted?

Suprapubic catheters are probably best inserted under a brief general anaesthetic and this usually requires an overnight stay in hospital.

What do I do if the catheter falls out?

If your catheter falls out, it must be re-inserted as soon as possible or the track into your bladder will close off rapidly. You should contact your family doctor or District Nurse immediately and, if they are unable to help you, come without delay to an Emergency Department where the catheter can be replaced promptly. If you have a supply of catheters yourself, it is reasonable to try and insert a new catheter; if you fail to do this, you should seek medical help without delay.

Permanent Suprapubic Catheterisation in Women continued...

Who can I contact for more help or information?

Dr Peter Campbell

Suite 9, level 9, Evan Thomson Building, The Wesley Hospital,
Chasely St,
Auchenflower, QLD 4066
(07) 3367 1608,
www.campbellurology.com.au

The Wesley Hospital, Urology Ward

451 Coronation Drive,
Auchenflower, QLD 4066
(07) 3232 7168
www.uhc.com.au/wesley

The Wesley Emergency Centre

451 coronation Drive,
Auchenflower, QLD 4066
(07) 3232 7333

Greenslopes Private Hospital, Continence Advisor

Newdgate St,
Greenslopes, QLD 4120
(07) 3394 7978
www.greenslopesprivate.com.au

Greenslopes Private Hospital Urology Ward

Newdgate St,
Greenslopes, QLD 4120
(07) 3394 7261
www.greenslopesprivate.com.au

Greenslopes Private Hospital Emergency Centre

Newdgate St,
Greenslopes, QLD 4120
(07) 3394 6777
www.greenslopesprivate.com.au

**The Queen Elizabeth II Jubilee Hospital,
Urodynamics Department**

Kessels Rd,
Coopers plains, QLD 4108
(07) 3275 6346

American Urological Association Foundation

1000 Corporate Blvd, Suite 410,
Linthicum, MD 21090
1800 828 7866
www.urologyhealth.org

Thank you for taking the trouble to read this information sheet. If you are satisfied with the explanation of the test, please sign below and this leaflet will be filed in your chart.

If you wish to retain a copy for you own records, one will be provided.

I have read this information sheet and I accept the information it provides.

Signature

Date
