

Clean Intermittent Catheterisation

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What is Clean Intermittent Catheterisation?

It is a method of totally emptying the bladder of urine at regular times during the day without the need for a catheter to be left in place. A fine plastic tube (catheter) is inserted into the bladder via the urethra (the hole through which we pass urine) and removed once the bladder is empty.

Why is it done?

The reason for this is to keep the kidneys and the tubes leading from them healthy, and enable the individual to look after him/ herself and stay dry.

Types of catheters

There is a great range of catheters available. The majority are made from plastic and may be clear or coloured. For convenience, when draining into the toilet becomes difficult, some catheters have the facility to drain into a bag. This type of catheter can also be used for instilling bladder washouts using a salt solution which clears mucus from the bladder.

Your nurse or consultant will advise you on the most suitable catheter to use.

What else do you need to know?

It is not necessary to wash the lower body area each time the catheter is passed. This can dry the mucus, which is the body's natural defence, and cause irritation. A daily shower, bath or wash, unless soiled, is enough.

It is extremely important that the bladder is totally emptied each time. This prevents urine being left in the bladder which can cause urinary infections. Some people find that if they cough or change their position once the urine stops flowing then more will be released.

It is also extremely important that the regime is followed regularly as leaving too long in between emptying can allow pressure to build up in the bladder. The appropriate times to empty are decided by the specialist nurse or the consultant.

The catheter should slip easily into the bladder. It should never be forced. Occasionally the muscle at the bottom of the bladder tightens up and will not relax to allow the catheter to slip in. Adopting a more comfortable position, relaxing or stopping the procedure for a few minutes is often enough to relax the sphincter. If the individual is very anxious then the muscle will be tight.

Occasionally, wetness in between bladder emptying can occur. This can be due to:

- a) Not emptying bladder often enough.

Solution

Specialist nurse on assessing management needs usually decides times. Reassessment required.

- b) Not totally emptying.

Solution

It is important that time is taken to empty.

- c) Poor muscle tone.

Solution

The muscle at the bottom of the bladder allowing urine to leak – a pad will have to be worn. Speak to specialist nurse.

- d) Urinary infection.

Solution

If urine is smelly or contains blood, or if the child has an unexplained temperature, arrange to have the urine checked for infection at the G.P. surgery.

- e) Irritable bladder.

Solution

If causes a) to d) have been eliminated this could be a possibility. The bladder can contract prematurely – refer to your consultant. Cold weather and menstruation can make this worse.

If you have any questions or would like further information, please do not hesitate to contact the Family Support Workers at:

Scottish Spina Bifida Association - Family Support Service

Address: The Dan Young Building, 6 Craighalbert Way, Cumbernauld, G68 0LS • Tel: 01236 794516 • Fax: 01236 736435

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