

## **How do I Care for My Urinary Drainage Bag and Leg Bag?**

### **PATIENT/FAMILY INFORMATION SHEET**

#### **What do I need to know in order to care for my drainage bag?**

Your indwelling, or Foley catheter and drainage bag is considered a “closed system,” which means that there are no openings from your urinary bladder to the drainage bag. It is important to keep this equipment clean and to maintain this closed system to keep bacteria and other germs from entering your urinary system and causing infection. It is also important to keep the drainage bag lower than your hip to prevent a back flow of urine into the bladder. Check the tubing for kinks or leaks daily.

To care for your drainage bag, you will need to know how to:

- Empty the drainage bag
- Change the drainage bag
- Clean the drainage bag

#### **How do I empty the drainage bag?**

Your drainage bag should be emptied, at a minimum, two to three times a day. If you are using a leg bag, this will need to be emptied more frequently, when it is 1/3 to 1/2 full. Either bag should not be allowed to become full. This will put pressure on the catheter and cause tugging and irritation in the area where the catheter enters your body. It also will be too heavy and bulky to carry around.

1. Wash your hands before and after emptying the bag.
2. The bag should be kept below the level of the hip (bladder) at all times to prevent urine from flowing back into the tubing and into the bladder.
3. Use a clean container to empty urine into if your doctor wants you to measure the amounts in the drainage bag. Otherwise, you can also empty the bag directly into the toilet.
4. Carefully open the spigot (pour spout) at the bottom of the bag to empty. Do not allow the spigot to touch the container or toilet. This causes contamination of the bag with bacteria.
5. Clean the end of the spigot with rubbing alcohol on a gauze pad or cotton ball.
6. Close the spigot securely to prevent leaking.
7. Do not allow the drainage bag to rest on the floor.



#### **How do I change my drainage bag?**

The drainage bag should be replaced at least monthly, or more frequently if there is clouding, odor, or discoloration of the bag. Depending upon your activity level, you may choose to use a leg bag during the day for greater mobility. To change the bag:

1. Wash your hands before and after changing the bag.
2. Disconnect the catheter from the drainage bag/leg bag tubing, being careful not to tug on the catheter end. Avoid touching the tube or catheter ends as you disconnect them.
3. Clean the ends of the drainage bag tubing and catheter with rubbing alcohol on either a gauze pad or cotton ball. Also clean the tubing end of the replacement bag (if it is not a new, sterile bag).
4. Connect the new/replacement bag tubing to the catheter snugly to prevent leaking.
5. Clean the connection site again with alcohol.
6. Cap the tubing end of the bag not in use.

### **How do I clean my drainage bag?**

If you are using a leg bag during the day, the drainage bag should be cleaned in the morning when changing to the leg bag, and the leg bag should be cleaned at night when changing back to the drainage bag.

*Bleach solution method (preferred):*

1. Wash your hands before and after cleaning the bag.
2. Disconnect the drainage bag from the catheter.
3. Use a soft, plastic squirt bottle to rinse the drainage bag tubing and bag with tap water and drain.
4. Mix a solution of 1 part bleach to 10 parts tap water. This would be 1 tablespoon of bleach to 5 ounces of water (a little over  $\frac{1}{2}$  a cup).
5. Pour the bleach solution into the drainage bag tubing and bag. Agitate for 30 seconds and drain the solution out of the bag.
6. Allow to air dry.

*Alternate vinegar solution method if bleach solution cannot safely be handled:*

1. Wash your hands before and after cleaning the bag.
2. Disconnect the drainage bag from the catheter.
3. Use a soft, plastic squirt bottle to rinse the drainage bag tubing and bag with tap water and drain.
4. Mix a solution of 1 part vinegar to 3 parts tap water. This would be  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of vinegar to 1 &  $\frac{1}{2}$  cups of tap water.
5. Pour the vinegar solution into the drainage bag tubing and bag. Agitate for 30 seconds and drain the solution out of the bag.
6. Allow to air dry.

Source: Nancy Walsh, RN, CWON, Greenwich Hospital.  
Emr, K, & Ryan, R. (2004). Best practice for indwelling catheter in the home setting. *Home Healthcare Nurse*, 22(12).  
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