

# Supporting Women with Intermittent Self-Catheterisation (ISC)



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NHS Prescription Dispensing Service

Many women experience bladder problems at some time in their life and Intermittent Self-Catheterisation (ISC) can be a very effective way to manage some of those problems. Conditions where ISC can be very effective include:

- Raised volumes in the bladder with irritative symptoms
- Incomplete bladder emptying (maybe due to bladder muscle problems or an obstruction)
- Post-operative acute urinary retention (temporarily unable to pass urine effectively)
- Post procedure such as Botox to the bladder

## So, what is Intermittent Self-Catheterisation?

ISC is a procedure whereby you intermittently insert a catheter in to your bladder to empty the urine at regular intervals throughout the day. It is a very simple procedure and with the correct training and after a little practice you should be able to complete the procedure in just a few minutes.

Your nurse will be able to teach you the procedure, advise you on how often to self-catheterise and help guide you in choosing the catheter best suited to your needs.

## Advantages:

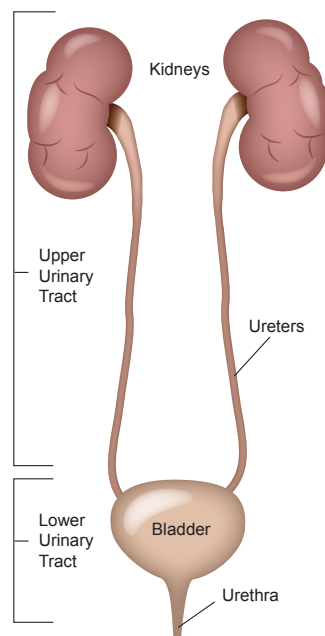
- Convenience
- It leaves you in control
- Prevents residual volumes building up in the bladder
- Can help reduce the number of visits to the toilet, especially at night
- Can help avoid urinary leakage
- Helps avoid urinary tract infection
- Protects kidney health

## Your Urinary System

Your urinary system comprises of your kidneys, ureters, bladder and urethra.

## Your Kidneys

The main function of your kidneys is to filter your blood and remove excess fluid and waste/toxins from it. They perform this continuously day and night and the waste product produced is your urine, which is passed to your bladder through a small tube, the ureter.



## Ureters

The ureters are narrow, hollow tubes leading from the kidneys to your bladder. There is one ureter connecting each kidney to the bladder. After passing through the ureter, your urine reaches the bladder where it is stored.

## Your Bladder

Your bladder is a hollow organ with a muscular wall. It has two primary functions; the storage of urine and the emptying of urine.

Your bladder fills continuously and as it enlarges you get a stronger urge to pass urine. At this point you will need to locate a toilet and when you do, the bladder muscle will contract and allow the urine to pass out of the bladder, through your urethra (water pipe) and away from the body.

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## The Urethra

Your urethra is a thin-walled tube that drains the urine from your bladder.

The female urethra is approximately 4-5cms in length.

## Choosing the right catheter for you

There is a wide variety of catheters available to choose from and they will all drain the bladder as they are designed to do. However, you may well find that one catheter suits you far better than another. The nurse who teaches you to perform ISC will be able to advise you on the various catheters that are available and guide you in making an informed choice.

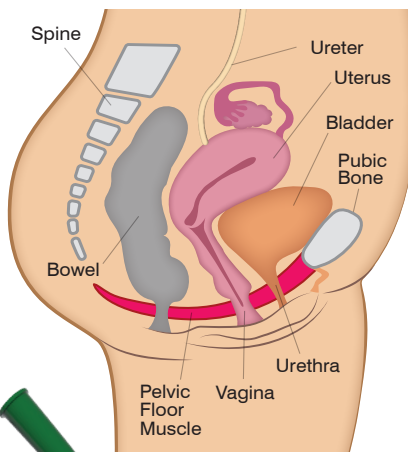
**Hydrophilic catheters** have a special coating on them so that when they come in to contact with water they self-lubricate. Some are ready to use straight from the packet and others will come with an integral water sachet to activate the coating.

**Hydrogel catheters** have a gel reservoir which lubricates the catheter as it passes through and are ready for use straight away.

There are also some catheters available with a drainage bag attached. These are very useful if you have restricted dexterity and mobility and cannot stand easily in the bathroom. They make catheterising in a sitting or lying position much easier.

## Hygiene

- ISC is a clean procedure not a sterile one.
- One of the key benefits of performing ISC is that it is less likely to lead to infection compared to an indwelling catheter, but only if a good standard of personal hygiene is maintained.
- Remember to wash your hands before and after performing ISC
- Normal soap and water are fine but antibacterial hand gel may be useful if you need to catheterise when out and about.
- Make sure that your genitalia is clean before self-catheterising too.
- Be careful not to touch anything else other than your catheter once you have washed.
- If your catheter touches anything or you drop it, throw it away and use a new one –  
**DO NOT put yourself at risk of infection.**



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## Performing ISC

The guidelines in this booklet are to support the information you are given by the nurse who teaches you how to perform ISC. Always follow the instructions given to you by your nurse.

### ISC Procedure:

Try to empty your bladder naturally before catheterising.

- Follow the cleaning and washing routine as outlined in the Hygiene section
- Lubricate your catheter as per manufacturer's instructions
- Find the position that best suits you for catheterising; you can sit, stand, squat, lay down, it is up to you.
- Part the labia with one hand and using your dominant hand insert the catheter in to your urethra until it enters the bladder.
- You may find that using a mirror to help locate your urethra is helpful while you are getting used to this procedure.
- Be careful not to touch any part of the catheter that is to enter your bladder.
- When the catheter enters the bladder urine will automatically begin to flow so make sure that the open end of the catheter is pointed towards the toilet, a bowl or jug.
- Hold the catheter still and allow your bladder to empty completely.
- When the flow of urine has stopped, slowly withdraw your catheter.
- Dispose of the used catheter and any other used items in a disposal bag and place in the general household rubbish.
- Always note the colour and smell of your urine and be aware of any changes. This could be an indication of a problem such as infection or poor fluid intake.
- Wash your hands.

**NOTE:** You must ALWAYS remove your ISC catheter after draining your bladder. **DO NOT be tempted to leave it in place as it could dry out and get stuck**

## Travel

Performing ISC should not affect your ability to lead a normal and active life, including travel. You can visit destinations at home and abroad as you choose, just make sure you plan ahead.

A few things to remember:

- If you are going on a long journey, be sure to take enough catheters in your hand luggage
- Carry some antibacterial hand gel and wet wipes in case you do not have access to soap and water.
- Be careful how you transport your catheters. Do not tightly roll or fold them. Most female catheters are small and discreet and make travelling easy.
- Store your catheters in a cool, dry place as excessive periods of extreme heat or cold may affect lubrication and cause them to dry out.
- If flying, it is worth checking your airline policy for carrying medical items in your luggage.
- Carry a note from your GP explaining that you need to carry some essential healthcare products in your hand luggage.

## Answering your Questions

It is only natural that you will have questions as you learn to self-catheterise. Here we will try to answer some of the most common ones that we come across.

Always tell your nurse if you have concerns, she is there to help you.

### Why have I been told I need to self-catheterise?

It is likely that your bladder has lost its ability to empty properly and performing ISC will help to keep your bladder and kidneys healthy by emptying it fully. It helps to reduce your risk of infection, prevent overflow incontinence and reduce the number of times you need to visit the toilet.

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## Will it be difficult for me to learn?

No, almost everyone can learn this procedure. It may feel a bit uncomfortable initially but over time you will master the technique.

## What if I see blood in my urine or it feels painful?

You may see a small amount of blood on occasion. This should clear very quickly and will cause you no problems. However, if you continue to bleed or feel unwell consult your nurse or GP.

## Will doing ISC hurt me?

It may feel strange at first, but the procedure should not be painful. Do speak to your nurse if you are concerned.

## How will I know how many times to do ISC?

Your nurse will advise you on this. It will depend on your situation, how much urine you are able to pass naturally and how much you drain through your catheter. Completing a bladder diary may be useful in this situation.

## What if I can't insert or remove the catheter?

Firstly, try to relax. It could be due to you being tense and coughing may help. Speak to your nurse if you are experiencing problems.

## Is doing ISC harmful to me?

If you are using the catheter recommended for you and following the correct instructions for use, it is not harmful at all.

## Will doing this affect my sex life?

You can maintain a normal, healthy sex life without any negative effects but do speak to your nurse if you are worried or have further questions.

For the first few days after you are taught to do ISC it is advisable that you keep a record of the volumes drained from your catheter. Use the chart below to record your volumes.

<b>Name:</b>			
Date	Time	Urine passed naturally	Catheter Volumes

Your Nurse is:

Nurse Contact Number:

Your Prescription Requirements			
Manufacturer	Product	Prescription Code	Pack Size

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**Freephone: 0800 999 5596**  
**info@manfredsauercare.co.uk**

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