

# Supporting Men with Intermittent Self-Dilatation (ISD)



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NHS Prescription Dispensing Service

Intermittent self-dilatation (ISD) or urethral dilatation is a procedure that you will be taught if you have a urethral stricture (a narrowing of your water pipe). By performing this procedure, you will be able to keep the urethra/water pipe open and prevent your stricture from recurring. This will then help you avoid further intervention such as surgery.

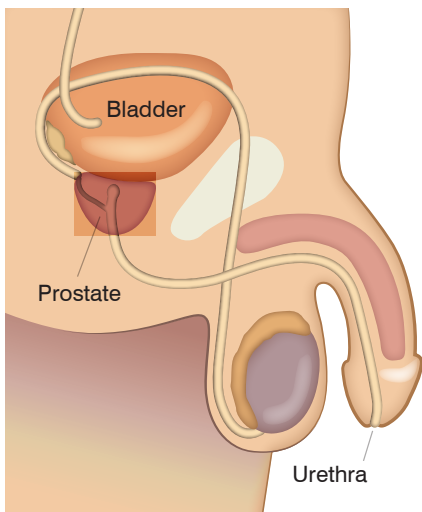
## Understanding what a urethral stricture is

A urethral stricture is an abnormal narrowing of the urethra or water pipe.

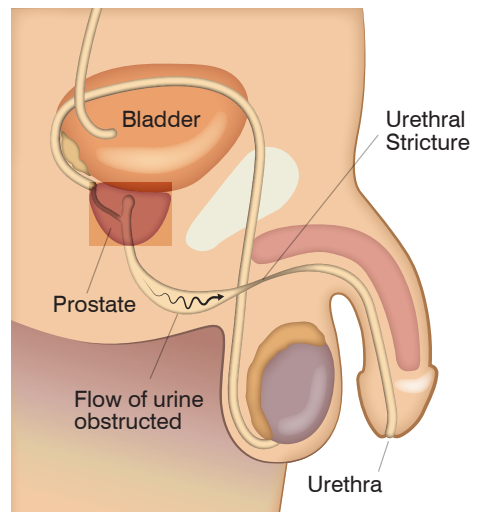
This can be caused by an accumulation of scar tissue following an infection or it could be down to trauma/injury. Sometimes there is no obvious cause.

The narrowing or stricture will almost certainly lead to a restriction in the flow of urine, meaning that it can take you a lot longer to empty your bladder and you may experience 'dribbling' when you think you have finished passing water. You may also find that you have to strain to pass urine, you may need to visit the toilet more frequently than usual and you may also experience 'spraying' and your urine might flow in two directions.

## The Normal Urethra



## Example of a Urethral Stricture



The male urethra is 18-20cms in length and a stricture can occur anywhere along that length. The common sites for urethral strictures in men are:

1. Meatal Stricture/Meatal stenosis – This occurs at the external opening to the urethra and tends to be more common in circumcised men.
2. The penile urethra
3. The bulbar urethra
4. The membranous urethra
5. The prostatic urethra

## Urethral Dilatation

Your urologist will usually take a look inside your urethra and bladder with a special camera (A cystoscope) to determine what is causing your urinary symptoms. If a stricture is discovered, it can sometimes be dilated there and then to help open up your water pipe. However, in some cases, and if the stricture is severe you may need to undergo a procedure called an Optical Urethrotomy.

Whichever procedure you have your urologist will request that you are taught Intermittent Self-Dilatation (ISD) to prevent your stricture from closing up again. This is something you will be required to do regularly, and your specialist nurse will be able to teach you the procedure and advise you on the best catheters available to you.

ISD is performed by passing a catheter (usually a size 16ch or 18ch) into your urethra on a regular basis. The catheter is well lubricated so that it slides in easily and you can perform ISD over a long period of time without any problems. Using gentle pressure, you will be able to insert your catheter in to your urethra. Your nurse will tell you how far to push the catheter in and how often to perform the procedure. You should continue to perform ISD indefinitely until your nurse or urologist tell you it is ok to stop.

## Choosing the right catheter for you

There is a wide variety of catheters available to choose from. However, you may well find that one catheter suits you far better than another. The nurse who teaches you to perform ISD 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.



## Hygiene

- ISD is a clean procedure not a sterile one.
- Your risk of infection is minimal compared to an indwelling catheter, but only if a good standard of personal hygiene is maintained.
- Remember to wash your hands before and after the procedure.
- Normal soap and water are fine but antibacterial hand gel may be useful if you are away from home.
- Make sure that your penis is clean before dilating 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.**



## Performing ISD

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

### ISD Procedure:

- Try to empty your bladder before dilating.
- Follow the cleaning and washing routine as outlined in the Hygiene section
- Lubricate your catheter as per manufacturer's instructions
- Pull back your foreskin (if you have one) and hold your penis firmly up towards your tummy with one hand.
- Insert your catheter with your dominant hand and be careful not to touch any part of the catheter that is to enter the body.
- If you have a meatal stricture you will only have to use a short catheter that goes into the urethra a few centimetres only.
- REMEMBER: Your nurse will be able to advise you on how far to insert your catheter according to where in the urethra your stricture has occurred.
- If you are advised to pass the catheter all the way in to your bladder and you have an enlarged prostate, you may feel some resistance as your catheter reaches that point. If this is the case, try coughing and gently continue to insert your catheter.
- If this does not help and there is continued resistance withdraw the catheter and try again a little later.
- 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.
- If you emptied your bladder before the procedure there should be only a minimal amount of urine.
- When the flow of urine has stopped slowly withdraw your catheter and make sure that you pull your foreskin back down in to position.
- Dispose of the used catheter and any other used items in a disposal bag and place in the general household rubbish.
- Wash your hands.



## Answering your Questions

It is only natural that you will have questions as you learn urethral dilatation. Here we will try to answer some of the most common ones that we come across. Always tell your nurse if you have concerns, he/she is there to help you.

## Why have I been told I need to perform ISD?

This is due to the fact that you have had a narrowing of your urethra (water pipe) and by performing ISD you are able to prevent this from recurring.

## 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, especially if you have an enlarged prostate. The prostate can be very vascular. 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.

Please find opposite an example of a dilatation regime that you can follow:

**NOTE: If at any time during the agreed dilatation regime you notice that your urine flow has diminished go back to the stage in your regime where the flow was good and speak to your nurse specialist.**

Your Nurse is:
Nurse Contact Number:

## Will doing ISD 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 often to do ISD?

Your nurse will advise you on this. It will depend on your situation, but your nurse will agree a dilatation regime with you

## 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 ISD 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.

Name
Daily for 2 weeks
Alternate days for 2 weeks
Twice a week for one month
Once a week ongoing

## Your Prescription Requirements

Manufacturer	Product	Prescription Code	Pack Size