

Spina Bifida & Clean Intermittent Catheterisation



Clean Intermittent Catheterisation is a technique which is used to empty the bladder at regular intervals. This is done by passing a catheter (small tube) into the bladder through the urethra (passage through which urine leaves the bladder). You should be taught how to do this by your continence nurse. It is not a sterile technique, but it is a clean one, so it is very important to have good hygiene standards when doing the procedure.

There are lots of catheters available. If the catheter is "self-lubricated", it means that after it is soaked in water for a short time it becomes slippery enough to insert. Some catheters are pre-lubricated, which means they have a slippery coating on them. With others, you will need to use a lubricating jelly to ease insertion. Your continence nurse will tell you how to use each type of catheter.

Catheters are available on prescription from your doctor. Some chemists will have to order the catheters for you, so make sure you have enough catheters to last while waiting for your next order to come in.

Tips

Try to avoid constipation because, if the bowel is empty, it makes it easier to drain the bladder properly. A high fibre diet can help. If your child becomes constipated, there may be wetting between catheterisations. Drinking at least 8 glasses of fluid a day helps to avoid constipation and urinary tract infections.

If your family are going to go on holiday abroad, it is advisable to ask your GP if you can have a letter for the Customs Officials stating that you have catheters with you. If you are in doubt about the water in the country you are visiting, it would be best to use bottled water.

Always remember to take enough supplies of catheters with you when going on holiday, either in this country or abroad. Remember to put them in your hand luggage if you are going on an aeroplane, as sometimes suitcases can get mislaid.

Potential Difficulties

If your child's urine becomes cloudy and smelly, they may have a urinary tract infection. Other signs of infection could be generally feeling unwell, headaches, and a raised temperature. Sometimes, if you are wet between catheterisations, this may also indicate an infection. See "*Urinary Tract Infections*" Information sheet.

If you sometimes see blood in your child's urine, don't worry – it could be due to a slight irritation or infection and should clear within a few days. If it doesn't, seek medical advice. If you have any problems or questions contact your SBHI Family Support Worker who can put you in touch with our Continence Advisor.