It is very important for you to catheterize on schedule.

Intermittent Self-Catheterization (Female)

Your doctor has ordered intermittent self-catheterization. A catheter is a flexible hollow tube that you insert into your bladder to drain all of your urine. It is very important for you to catheterize yourself on schedule and use a new catheter each time. This helps prevent a urinary tract infection and loss of bladder control (incontinence).

You are to drain your bladder with the catheter every _____ hours.

Supplies

A doctor’s prescription is needed to purchase catheters. You can buy them at any medical supply store. For self-catheterization, you will need:

- Catheter
- Water-soluble lubricant, such as K-Y Jelly®. Do not use Vaseline®.

Preparation and Procedure

1. Wash your hands with soap and water, a towelette or waterless hand cleaner.

2. Spread the labia apart. Wash the area around the urinary opening (urethral orifice) with soap and water or a moist towelette, such as baby wipes. Be sure to wipe from front to back.

3. Place a generous amount of water-soluble lubricant along the tip of the catheter.

4. If you are right handed, use the 2nd and 4th finger of
Figure 1: Use your left hand to hold your labia apart (See Figure 1).

5. Locate the urinary opening with the 3rd finger of your left hand.

6. With your right hand, hold the catheter about 1 inch from the tip. Direct the catheter slightly upward toward the navel (belly button). Continue to insert the catheter gently until urine begins to flow (See Figure 2).

7. Allow the urine to drain until the urine flow stops.

8. Remove the catheter slowly. Stop whenever urine flows and allow it to drain. Continue to remove the catheter slowly.

9. Pinch the catheter just before removing it completely, to avoid leaking urine from the tube.

10. Wash your hands.

Helpful Hints

- You may catheterize while standing, sitting, squatting or lying on your back in your own home. It is important to learn to catheterize yourself while standing in case you need to use a public restroom or one is unavailable (e.g., while camping).

- For the first time, use a mirror to find the location of the urinary opening. Once you are comfortable with the procedure, practice and learn to catheterize yourself without a mirror so that you do not become dependent on using one.

- If you cannot easily insert the catheter and you become nervous, stop and take a deep breath. Then start over. It is normal to have difficulty the first few times.

- Do not force the catheter at any time.

- Ask your doctor how much water or other fluids you should drink each day.

- Always carry antiseptic towelettes to cleanse your hands in case water is not available.
When to Call the Doctor

Your doctor may prescribe an antibiotic to reduce the risk of infection. If you notice any of the following, contact your doctor as soon as possible.

- Unusually cloudy, foul-smelling or blood-tinged urine.
- Pain over the bladder area (lower abdomen).
- Temperature higher than 101.5 °F.
- Chills.
- Leaking urine in between catheterizations.

Your doctor or Advance Practice Nurse:

Telephone number:

Health Information Resources

For more information, visit one of Northwestern Memorial Hospital’s Health Learning Centers. These state-of-the-art health libraries are located on the third floor of the Galter Pavilion and on the first floor of the Prentice Women’s Hospital. Health information professionals are available to help you find the information you need and provide you with personalized support at no charge. You may contact the Health Learning Centers by calling 312-926-LINK (5465) or by sending an e-mail to hlc@nmh.org.

For additional information about Northwestern Memorial Hospital, please visit our Web site at www.nmh.org.