



# Intermittent Self Catheterisation for Women



[www.fittleworth.com](http://www.fittleworth.com)

**Opening Hours:**  
8 am to 8 pm Monday to Friday  
9 am to 1 pm Saturday

**National: 0800 378 846**  
**Scotland: 0800 783 7148**

# Intermittent Self Catheterisation for Women

Bladder problems are much more common than you would expect. There are lots of men, women and children who experience bladder issues, and use Intermittent Self Catheterisation (ISC) as a way to help them lead a normal life.

## Reasons for using ISC

There may be a number of reasons why you are unable to empty your bladder, and these should have been explained to you by your healthcare professional.

## What is ISC?

Intermittent Self Catheterisation (ISC) is the insertion and removal of a catheter at regular intervals during the day to empty the bladder. This is done by inserting the catheter through the urethra (this is the tube that leads from the bladder to the outside opening).

Your Specialist Nurse will be able to teach you how to self catheterise, advise you on how often it should be done, and will also help you make a choice on which type of catheter is best suited to your needs. The procedure is simple to carry out and after a little practice, can be done in just a few minutes.

## Advantages of ISC

The key advantage of performing ISC is convenience, allowing you to manage your bladder at times and places that suit you, giving you more control of your life.

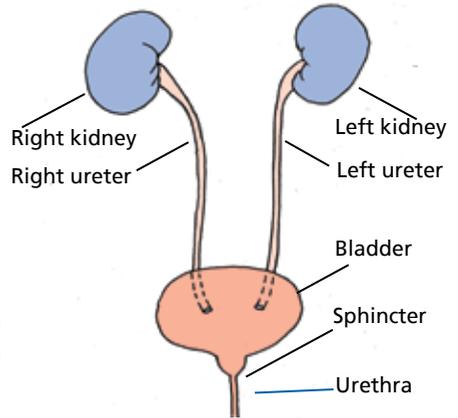
Emptying your bladder completely prevents residues or urine remaining which will reduce the amount of times you need to visit the toilet. This not only protects the bladder but also reduces the risk of leakage, urinary tract infections and other complications.

# The Urinary System

Your urinary system is made up of the kidneys, ureters, bladder, urethra and the internal and external sphincters.

## Kidneys

The kidneys extract soluble waste products from the blood and this becomes your urine. They perform this process continuously, 24 hours a day. The urine passes to the bladder through a small tube called a ureter.

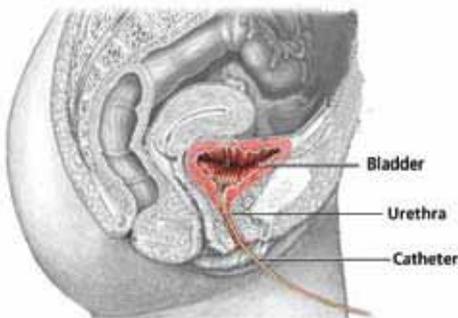


## Ureters

The ureters are narrow, hollow tubes that lead from the kidneys to the bladder. There is one ureter connecting each kidney to the bladder. After passing along the ureter, the urine arrives at the bladder where it is stored.

## Bladder

The bladder is a hollow organ with a muscular wall and has two primary functions – the storage and emptying of urine. The bladder is filling continuously.



As it enlarges, the urge to empty increases. This is when you will feel the need to go to the toilet; where muscles will allow the urine to pass out of the bladder into the urethra, and away from the body.

## Urethra

The function of the urethra is to drain urine from the bladder.

## Catheter Types

There are a number of different types of catheter available. All perform the same basic function of draining the bladder, but as we are all individuals, you may find that one catheter suits you better than another. Your Specialist Nurse will advise you on the choice available and the one that best suits your needs.

1. Hydrophilic – these catheters have a special coating and either come ready to use or are activated after being immersed in water for around 30 seconds. They are often packaged with a small sachet of sterile water that is used for this purpose.

2. Hydrogel – these catheters have a gel reservoir which lubricates the catheter as it passes through and are ready for immediate use.

Many catheters are also available with a urine collection bag attached. This may be useful for you if you do not have a great deal of dexterity and find holding the catheter difficult.



These catheters are for single use only unless otherwise directed by your healthcare professional.

## Basic Hygiene

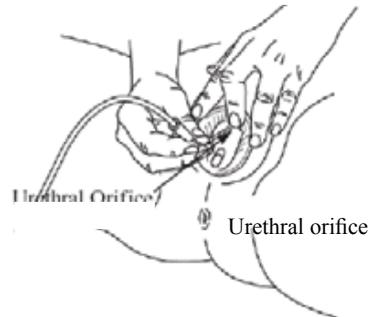
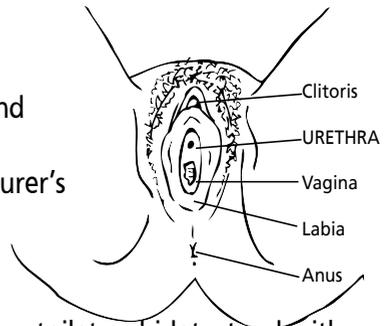
- With ISC it is essential that a clean procedure is used. The main benefit of using ISC is that it reduces the likelihood of infection compared to indwelling catheters but this is only the case if good hygiene habits are maintained.
- Wash your hands (soap and water is fine, but an antibacterial hand gel can be used instead; this may be especially useful if you are away from home, using a public toilet etc)
- Cleanse genital area, this should be done from front to back. Mild soap and water is all that is required. Dry with a clean towel.
- Do not touch anything else apart from your catheter.

## Performing ISC

The information provided here is intended as follow up advice to support that given to you by your Specialist Nurse. Always follow the advice you have been given by the nurse.

### Insertion and Removal Procedure

1. Ensure that you have followed the cleaning and washing routine.
2. Lubricate the catheter following the manufacturer's instructions.
3. Adopt the position that you find most comfortable in order to catheterise. You may need to lie down with your knees apart, sit on a toilet or bidet, stand with one leg raised over the toilet or indeed squatting. It is important that you find out what works best for you.
4. Part the labia with one hand and insert the catheter into the urethra with the other. Do not handle the end of the catheter that is to enter the bladder. You may find that using a mirror helps initially at this stage.
5. If it is more difficult to insert as it gets nearer the bladder, cough slightly and continue to insert gently. If there is continued resistance withdraw and try again a little later.
6. When the catheter reaches the bladder, ensure that the open end of the catheter is pointed towards the toilet, a bowl or jug as it will begin to drain immediately it enters the bladder. Hold the catheter still and allow bladder to empty.
7. Slowly withdraw the catheter.
8. Dispose of the catheter.
9. Look at the colour of your urine and note any change of colour or smell. This will indicate any problems with infection or if you are not drinking enough fluids.
10. Wash your hands.



### IMPORTANT

**YOU MUST REMOVE THE CATHETER AFTER DRAINING YOUR BLADDER, IT MUST NOT BE LEFT IN PLACE**

## Travel

Using ISC should not affect your ability to lead a normal life and that includes travel. You can fly and visit destinations at home and abroad just like anyone else. Below are some handy tips for you to consider when travelling.

Depending on the length of your journey, take enough catheters with you in your hand baggage. You should take some antibacterial gel or wipes when travelling to allow you to clean your hands as not all toilets on your journey will have soap and running water.

Do not tightly coil your catheters as this can cause them to block. Some catheters can be loosely coiled for a short period, but this should be as short as possible - follow your manufacturer's recommendations.

Keep your catheters in a cool, dry place as excessive heat over a prolonged period may cause the lubricating gel to dry out.

Before travelling, you will need to check with your airline their policy for carrying these items in your luggage, as Customs and Security officials may ask you questions about the catheters. Fittleworth can also send you a Travel card that explains why you have the appliances with you.

Fittleworth can offer business or leisure travellers other forms of support too. Fittleworth is the exclusive UK member of the World Assist Alliance; a network dedicated to helping stoma and continence customers with emergency goods when abroad on holiday or business. The same discreet service you expect from Fittleworth and usually within 48 hours.



### Who is eligible?

Fittleworth customers who have had 3 or more prescriptions dispensed in the previous 12 months. Simply call your normal Fittleworth contact number with your details and requirements and we will do the rest. There is no need to get a prescription or claim on insurance and World Assist Alliance is a FREE of charge service.



## Questions and Answers

You are bound to have questions with regard to ISC, and below we have detailed a few of the most common questions together with answers to help you. If you have any concerns with regard to ISC, please contact your healthcare professional.

### Q. Why have I been told I need to use ISC?

A. Your bladder has lost its ability to empty properly; carrying out ISC will help to keep your bladder and kidneys healthy by emptying it fully. It helps to reduce the chances of infection, prevent overflow incontinence and also reduces the urge to frequently visit the toilet.

### Q. Is it difficult to learn?

A. No nearly everyone can learn to perform ISC. It may feel a bit awkward at first but practice makes perfect. Your nurse will help you find the right catheter and position.

### Q. What if I see blood in my urine or experience pain?

A. It can be normal to see a little blood when you first start ISC but it will clear up. If it continues or if you feel unwell, feverish or are experiencing pain you may have an infection and should see your GP.

### Q. Will it hurt?

A. ISC may feel strange at first but it should not be painful. Please consult with your nurse if you are having problems or you are finding it painful.

### Q. How many times should I perform ISC?

A. Your healthcare professional should advise you on this. It depends on your individual situation, how much urine you are passing and the amount drained with the catheter. You may find completing a bladder diary helpful.

### Q. What if I can't insert or withdraw the catheter?

A. Firstly, try and relax. Most problems are related to muscles tensing up. Coughing may help insertion and withdrawal. Speak to your nurse if you are experiencing problems.  
**NEVER CUT THE CATHETER**

### Q. Is it harmful?

A. If you are using the correct catheter and following the instructions it is not at all harmful.

### Q. Will it affect my sex life?

A. No. You can still maintain a sex life without any adverse effects. Do speak to your nurse if you have any questions or concerns.

# Urinary 3 Day Record Chart

Your Fittleworth Clinical Nurse Advisor is:

It is important in the first days after starting self-catheterisation to keep a record of the volume of fluids that you drink and the amount of urine that you pass. This will help identify if you are maintaining a good level of hydration and that you are completely emptying your bladder. You can use the form below to record these amounts, or you can just jot it down on a piece of paper. Try and record the amounts as accurately as possible, Fittleworth can supply you with a graduated jug that you can use for this purpose.

Your Name:

Date	Time	Input type and amount of liquid (mls)	Urine passed (mls)		Did you have any leakage?
			Without a catheter	With a catheter	



POST...

Fittleworth  
FREEPOST  
Hawthorn Road  
Littlehampton  
West Sussex  
BN17 7LT



PHONE...

Freephone National:  
0800 378 846  
  
Freephone Scotland:  
0800 783 7148



ONLINE...

[www.fittleworth.com](http://www.fittleworth.com)



fittleworth