

*North Carolina Women's Hospital*  
**Having Your Urinary Catheter Removed After  
Gynecologic Surgery**

**What is a urinary catheter?**

A urinary catheter, often called a Foley catheter, is a soft tube placed into the bladder (the organ that holds urine) to drain urine continuously.

**Why is a urinary catheter used?**

A urinary catheter is used to keep your bladder empty while you are healing after surgery. Surgery and anesthesia can affect the bladder's normal sensations, making it difficult for you to urinate (empty your bladder) on your own for a while. Also, if you had surgery on your bladder, it is important for the bladder to remain empty of urine for a few days so that the incisions can heal. Your catheter may stay in place for one or more weeks after you go home, depending on the type of surgery.

**Where will I go to have the catheter removed?**

Your catheter will be removed in the outpatient clinic. A clinic appointment will be made for you before you leave the hospital.

**How is the catheter removed?**

A nurse will disconnect your catheter from the drainage bag. She will then attach a syringe to the catheter and allow saline water to gently flow into your bladder. When your bladder is full, the catheter will be removed. You then will go to the bathroom, and the nurse will measure the amount of water you are able to empty from your bladder.

**Will the catheter need to be replaced?**

If you are not able to empty your bladder completely on your own, your catheter may need to be replaced for a few more days. Another option might be for the nurse to teach you how to "[self-cath](#)" for a few days. This involves inserting a very small tube in your own bladder after you go to the bathroom to check how much urine is left in the bladder. You and your provider will decide which method is better for you.

### **What do I do after my catheter is removed?**

- Go to the bathroom at least every 2 ½ -3 hours while you are awake.
- Urinate before you go to bed and as needed during the night.
- Drink plenty of water (6 to 8 cups) each day.
- Avoid caffeine if possible.
- Limit your fluid intake after the evening meal.

### **What if I have trouble emptying my bladder?**

If you have trouble emptying your bladder, do the following:

- Urinate normally then stand up and sit back down on the commode. Try again to urinate.
- Sit in a tub of warm water and try to urinate in the tub.
- Run or rinse warm water over your vaginal area while sitting over the toilet or in the shower.

### **When should I call my clinic or doctor?**

Call your clinic or doctor if you have questions and if you have any of the following symptoms:

#### **Retention** (unable to empty your bladder)

- You feel as if you need to urinate but can't
- You are unable to urinate for more than 3 hours
- You notice your abdomen swelling

#### **Infection**

- You have severe lower back pain
- You have chills or fever of 100.4 F or greater
- You have burning pain when you start or stop urinating
- You feel the urge to urinate more often than usual
- You have nausea and vomiting

### **How do I reach my doctor when I have problems and questions?**

Call your clinic or doctor's office for concerns and questions during office hours Monday through Friday. At night or during the weekends, call the main hospital number, 919-966-4131 and have the Gynecology Resident on call paged.