Permanent suprapubic catheterisation in women:
Frequently asked questions

What determines whether a suprapubic or urethral catheter is chosen?

When an indwelling or long term catheter to drain the bladder, is advised, the question of whether this is best placed in the urethra (water pipe) or suprapubically (directly into the bladder through the skin over the bladder) arises.

A number of issues are considered in this question and are discussed below. Some problems related to catheters probably occur equally often with urethral or suprapubic catheters. These include the risk of:

- infection (or persistent carriage of bacteria in the urine)
- catheter blockages
- bladder spasms causing leakage of urine either around the catheter or via the urethra (water pipe) with suprapubic catheters.

In other words, neither sort of catheter has any advantage in respect of these problems.

What are the advantages of a suprapubic catheter?
The first and most obvious advantage of suprapubic catheters is that they are usually, but not always, significantly easier to change than urethral catheters.

This is because the pathway from the skin to the bladder is usually straight, readily accessible, and short.

Whereas urethral catheters usually need to be changed by a District Nurse or a Doctor, it is much more likely that a carer, or possibly the patient herself, can change a suprapubic catheter.
Are there any other advantages?
A further advantage of suprapubic catheters for women is that the area round the urethra and the adjacent genitalia is not continually irritated by the presence of a catheter. This reduces soreness and discomfort.

In women who are sexually active, the absence of a urethral catheter is an obvious advantage.

How are suprapubic catheters inserted?
Suprapubic catheters are probably best inserted under a brief general anaesthetic and this usually requires an overnight stay in hospital.

What do I do if the catheter falls out?
If your catheter falls out, it must be re-inserted as soon as possible or the track into your bladder will close off rapidly.

You should contact your GP or district nurse immediately and, if they are unable to help you, come without delay to the Accident and Emergency department where the catheter can be replaced promptly.

If you have a supply of catheters yourself, it is reasonable to try and insert a new catheter; if you fail to do this, you should seek medical help without delay.

Other information
This patient information leaflet provides input from specialists, the British Association of Urological Surgeons, the Department of Health and evidence based sources as a supplement to any advice you may already have been given by your GP. Alternative treatments can be discussed in more detail with your urologist or specialist nurse.

Who can I contact for more help or information?

**Oncology nurses**
Uro-oncology nurse specialist
01223 586748

**Bladder cancer nurse practitioner (haematuria, chemotherapy and BCG)**
01223 274608

**Prostate cancer nurse practitioner**
01223 274608 or 216897 or bleep 154-548

**Surgical care practitioner**
01223 348590 or 256157 or bleep 154-351

**Non-oncology nurses**
Urology nurse practitioner (incontinence, urodynamics, catheter patients)
01223 274608 or 586748 or bleep 157-237

Urology nurse practitioner (stoma care)
01223 349800
Permanent suprapubic catheterisation women FAQ

Urology nurse practitioner (stone disease)
01223 349800 or bleep 152-879

Patient Advice and Liaison Centre (PALS)
Telephone:
+44 (0)1223 216756
PatientLine: *801 (from patient bedside telephones only)
E mail: pals@addenbrookes.nhs.uk
Mail: PALS, Box No 53
Addenbrooke’s Hospital
Hills Road, Cambridge, CB2 2QQ

Chaplaincy and multi faith community
Telephone: +44 (0)1223 217769
E mail: chaplaincy@addenbrookes.nhs.uk
Mail: The Chaplaincy, Box No 105
Addenbrooke’s Hospital
Hills Road, Cambridge, CB2 2QQ

MINICOM System (“type” system for the hard of hearing)
Telephone: +44 (0)1223 217589

Access office (travel, parking and security information)
Telephone: +44 (0)1223 596060

We are a smoke-free site: smoking will not be allowed anywhere on the hospital site. For advice and support in quitting, contact your GP or the free NHS stop smoking helpline on 0800 169 0 169.

Other formats:
If you would like this information in another language or audio, please contact Interpreting services on telephone: 01223 348043, or email: interpreting@addenbrookes.nhs.uk For Large Print information please contact the patient information team: patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk

Document history
Authors
Pharmacist
Mr Nikesh Thiruchelvam (on behalf of the Consultant Urologists)
Olufolake Ajose-Adeogun

Department
Department of Urology, Box No 43
Cambridge University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, Hills Road, Cambridge, CB2 0QQ www.cuh.org.uk / www.camurology.org.uk

Contact number
01223 216575/ Fax 01223 216069

Publish/Review date
September 2018/September 2020

File name
Permanent_suprapublic_catheterisation_women_v8.doc

Version number/Ref
V9/PIN1948/Doc ref 7934

Local Ref number
03/Info_09_18