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# TAKING CARE OF YOU

*A Girls' Guide to Using a Catheter*

## Note to Parents

Teaching your daughter to self-catheterize is an important step in her development. Along with helping her grow her responsibilities, it's a big confidence booster as she matures and desires the independence all kids want. Being able to take care of her body gives her more freedom to be herself.

Learning new skills can be challenging, for both parents and kids. It's natural to question when your child is ready to take on self-catheterization. The good news is, if your child can hold a pencil and write her name, she has the dexterity required to take this step. She can do it. And so can you.

Even when kids have learned the steps to self-catheterize, keeping track of time can be tricky. Gentle reminders from an adult or assistance setting an alarm on their phone or watch can be very helpful.

As always, if you have questions about creating a plan for your child, ask your pediatric urology team for help.

## DOING THE SAME THING

# DIFFERENTLY

Everyone goes to the bathroom. You might call it wee, or potty, or pee. It's what your nurse or doctor probably calls "urination."

Not everyone goes the same way. Some people go directly into the toilet. Others, like you, need to use a catheter.

A catheter simply helps you pee so your bladder doesn't get too full. Keeping your bladder from getting too full helps you stay healthy.

Until now, you've had people such as your parents, other family members, and nurses help you with your catheter. Now that you're growing up, it's time to learn to do this on your own.

.....  
**Won't it be great to take care of yourself?  
Think of all the things you can do with your friends.**

### **FUN FACT:**

**If you can write your name with a pen or pencil, you already have all the skills you need to use your catheter yourself!**



# WHY doesn't my bladder work?

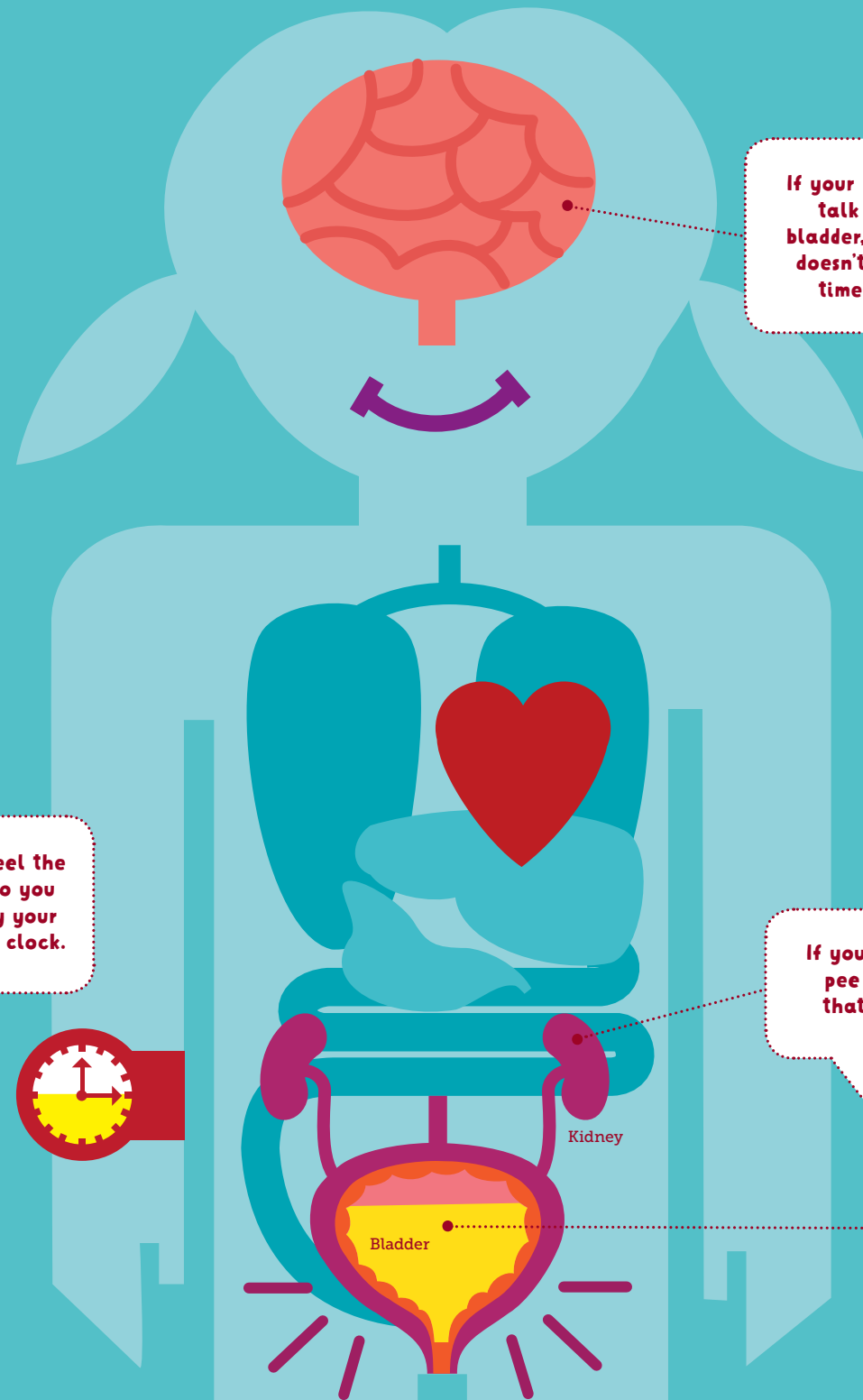
Your bladder is an organ that talks with your brain.

When you eat and drink, the nutrients your body needs are absorbed into your bloodstream. Your kidneys are a filter that decides what you need and what you don't. The liquid your body can't use goes into your bladder.

When the bladder is full, it tells your brain that it's time to pee. If you use a catheter, that means the connection between your brain and your bladder isn't working.

There are many reasons why kids and adults need to use catheters to help empty their bladders. **You are not alone!**

**VERY IMPORTANT!** Taking care of your bladder means making sure it is emptied on a regular schedule, so it doesn't get too full.



If your brain can't talk to your bladder, your body doesn't know it's time to pee.

If your bladder isn't emptied by the catheter, it can get too full. When it's full, the urine has no where to go and it creates pressure in your bladder than can hurt your kidneys.

Urine in your kidneys can make you sick. You can get a fever, an infection, and even end up in the hospital. Your catheter helps make sure that doesn't happen!

You may not feel the need to pee so you need to empty your bladder by the clock.

If your bladder gets too full, your pee stays in your kidneys. And that can make you really sick.

Your bladder and your brain aren't able to talk to each other. So your bladder needs the help of a catheter to let the pee out.



Hi. I'm a clock. And I'm a friend to your bladder. I help you remember to use your catheter, so you stay healthy!

7:00 am  
Pee!

8:00 am  
BREAKFAST

# MAKE TIME + KEEP TIME

Your bladder can't tell your brain when it's time to go. Letting too much time pass can lead to you getting sick. It's important to keep a set schedule for using your catheter. Every four hours is a good guide. Your nurse will help create the right schedule for you.

9:00 am  
SCHOOL BEGINS

10:00 am  
RECESS

Noon  
LUNCH

11:00 am  
Pee!

1:00 pm  
ARTS + CRAFTS

2:00 pm  
LIBRARY

With four hours in between emptying, you'll have plenty of time to hang out with your friends, go to the mall, play a game, or see a movie without missing a thing!

And if you know you'll be at longer events, you can adjust your schedule for it.

3:00 pm  
Pee!

4:00 pm  
MUSIC PRACTICE

There will be times you won't want to go—like if you're having fun, or busy at school.

5:00 pm  
DINNER

But even your friends who don't catheterize stop for bathroom breaks. Your catheter break might take a little longer, but the more you practice, the better you'll get at it.

7:00 pm  
Pee!



MOVIES

6:00 pm  
FUN WITH FRIENDS

Remember, it's better to miss a few moments of play and stay healthy.



# 4 STEPS

## TO SELF-CATHETERIZATION

Ready to learn? There are four steps you will need to know. At first, it might seem like a lot. But don't worry. You can always get help, and before long you will get the hang of it.



STEP  
**2**

## Get Clean!

Staying clean helps protect against infection.

It's very important to keep your hands, the area between your legs where your pee comes out, and the catheter clean when you insert. Wash your hands with soap and water or a cleaning wipe before unwrapping your catheter. Try not to touch the toilet, door handles or the faucet after you wash.

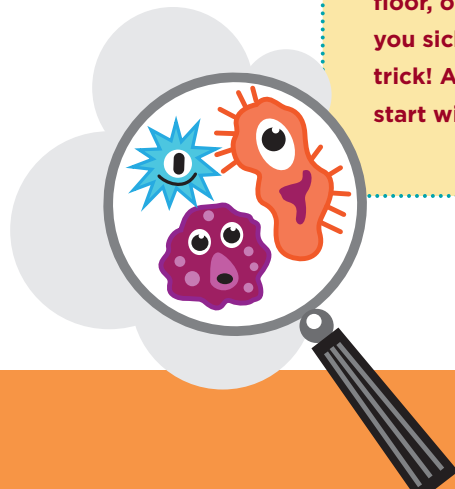
Before you insert the catheter, you can use a lubricant to make it extra slippery and easier to put in. Be careful, because your catheter might slip right out of your hands!

If you drop your catheter, it may come into contact with germs that can make you sick. If you drop it, re-wash your hands and use a new catheter.



### IMPORTANT!

**Germs on your hands, the floor, or counter can make you sick—staying clean is the trick! Always wash up, and start with a fresh catheter.**



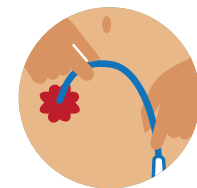
STEP  
**3**

## Insert the Catheter!

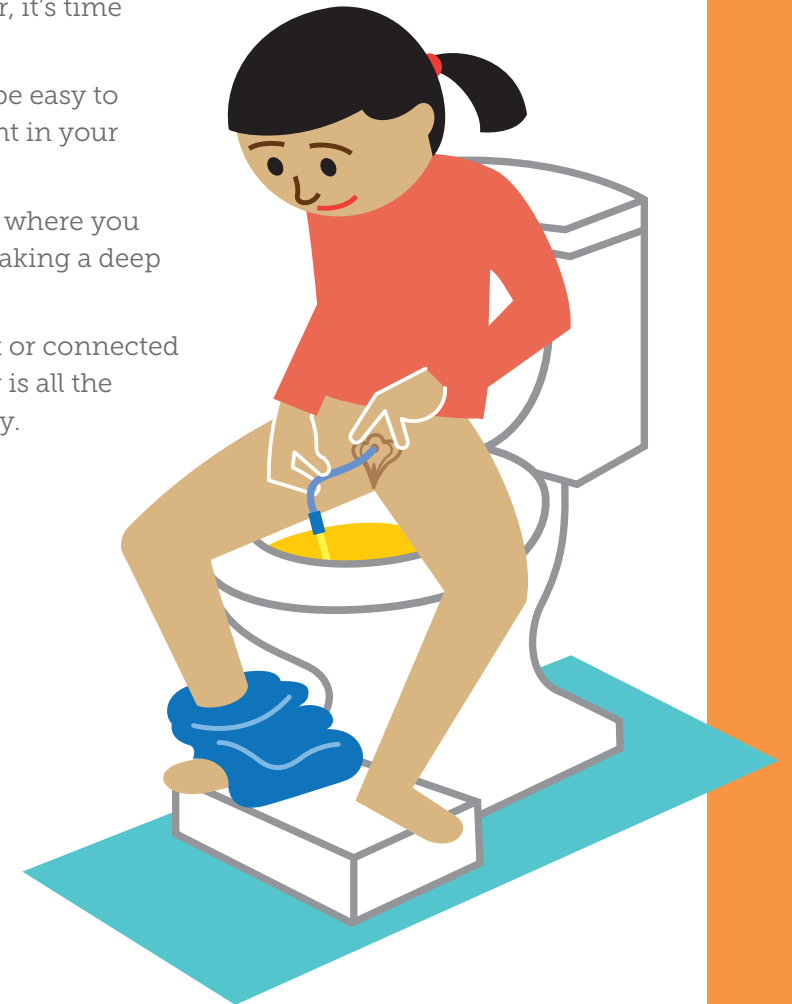
After you've washed your hands and removed and lubricated the catheter from its wrapper, it's time to insert.

- Sit comfortably on the toilet so it will be easy to empty your pee. You can also stay right in your wheelchair if you use one.
- Gently slide the catheter into the hole where you pee (urethra). Go slowly. Sometimes, taking a deep breath can help relax your muscles.
- Be sure the other end is over the toilet or connected to a collection bag. When the catheter is all the way in, your bladder will start to empty.

### Do you pee a little differently?



You may have had an operation to create a small opening in your belly. This opening is called a stoma. To empty your bladder, you insert the catheter into your stoma, instead of your urethra.



STEP  
4

## Empty All the Way

When the pee stops flowing into the toilet or your collection bag, slowly start to pull the catheter out.

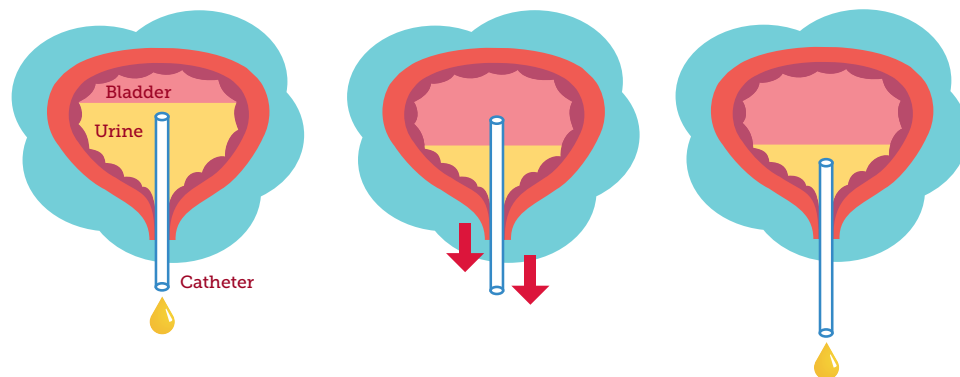
If more pee starts coming, stop pulling and wait for the pee to finish.

When the pee stops coming out, slowly pull the catheter all the way out. Throw it away, clean the area between your legs where your pee comes out (or the area around your stoma) with a wipe, and wash your hands.

***That's it. You've done it!***

### Why does more come out after I start to pull the catheter out?

Your catheter enters the bladder from the bottom. If the catheter is too far up, the pee can't reach it to drain out. If you pull the catheter down just a little, the pee will drain when the catheter dips back in it. So that's why it's smart to go slow and make sure all the pee is done before you finish.



## BECOMING AN EXPERT

Pretty soon, you'll know all there is to know about your catheter and emptying your bladder. Until then, it's normal to have questions or feel a bit uncertain. You are learning something new. Be patient. And remember you are not alone.

**Do I need to set my alarm to empty in the middle of the night?**

Because you're not eating or drinking while you're asleep, your kidneys make less pee. What does fill up in your bladder can often wait until you wake up in the morning. But, it helps to avoid drinking large amounts of liquid right before bed, and always remember to pee before you say goodnight.

**I'm scared to try something new.**

Your catheter might feel strange at first, but practice makes perfect! Sometimes it helps to relax and take a deep breath like you're blowing out your birthday candles.

Find more answers to your questions on the next page...

**I noticed that I have a little pee in my underwear in between bathroom visits.**

That can happen sometimes. Make sure you are not waiting too long to empty your bladder. Remember the most important thing is to stick to your catheter schedule. If you are noticing more dribbling than usual, tell your parent or guardian right away.

**NEWS FLASH!**

Tell your mom, dad, guardian, or nurse right away if you notice any of these signs:

- Burning feeling when you pee
- You notice blood in your pee
- You feel like you need to pee more often than usual, or feel pressure in your body

**Do I have to tell people I use a catheter?**

Only if you want to. It's a good idea to let your teacher or school nurse know about your special pee routine. They can be available to help you if you need it.

Some kids like to tell their friends—some don't. There is no right answer. No one can tell that you pee with a catheter by looking at you. It's up to you if you want to share.

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**CONGRATULATIONS! Now you know how to use your own catheter. Every day that you practice, you will get better and better. As you get more comfortable using your catheter, you will do lots of new things on your own. Keep up the good work!**