Male user guide to Intermittent Self Catheterisation

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What is intermittent self-catheterisation?
Intermittent self-catheterisation (ISC) involves passing a small tube, called a catheter, up into the bladder to allow all the urine to flow out. This allows the bladder to be emptied when you need to. And, with practice, the process can take only a few minutes.

This is usually easy to do and should not cause any damage to your bladder or urethra, even if you carry out ISC over long periods of time.

You may have to do ISC because your bladder has lost the ability to empty properly. Needing to do ISC could be temporary or permanent. But, whatever the reason, it will help you to manage and improve your bladder health.

There are many advantages of ISC. It can:

1. protect your kidneys
2. Reduce the risk of urinary-tract infections
3. Improve your quality of life
4. Improve your comfort

It should not interfere with your sex life.

How does the bladder work?
The kidneys cleanse the blood of any waste that the body produces. This waste, excreted by the kidneys as urine, passes continuously from the kidneys down the ureters into the bladder. The bladder collects and stores urine so that, under normal circumstances, you can pass it out when you need to.

When you feel the need to empty your bladder, the bladder sends a message to the brain, which tells the bladder muscle to contract and the sphincter to relax. This starts the process of urination through the urethra. This will continue until the bladder is completely empty. Normally we urinate about four to six times a day and occasionally at night.

Information taken from the Astra Tech booklet on LoFric® catheters

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Information taken from the Astra Tech booklet on LoFric® catheters
Where do I store my catheter?
Your supply of catheters will come in a foil packet within a cardboard box. Try to keep them flat, dry and away from direct sunlight, extreme cold and damp areas. Do not tie them in bundles with bands. Don’t try to conceal the catheters close to your body if you go out as the moistness of your skin can affect the catheter coating. Remember to check the expiry date of your catheter before you use it. This is usually on the outer pack of each catheter.

Am I still able to travel abroad?
Yes, of course! Ask your doctor or urology nurse for a letter stating that the catheters you are taking with you are for emptying your bladder. This can save you a lot of trouble with custom’s officials. If you have any doubts about the quality of water abroad, use still bottled mineral water or something similar.

Remember to take enough catheters with you on holiday and Do not forget to pack some in your hand luggage!

How do I fit ISC into everyday life?
You should get into a routine which fits ISC into your life smoothly. Try to find situations and times of the day convenient for carrying out ISC such as coffee breaks and before lunch. This will allow you to manage your ISC without interfering with your work, academic or other activities.

If possible leave some extra catheters at places where you often go such as work, friends homes, holiday homes or with relatives.
How much should I drink?
It is usually recommended to drink at least six to eight cups of fluid every day. Try to limit the tea and coffee you drink, as the caffeine in these can irritate your bladder.

How do I know if I have a urinary tract infection (UTI)?
If you experience shivering, a high temperature or fever, or cloudy or smelly urine, you may have an infection. Drink extra fluids, continue to catheterise and contact your doctor or nurse for advice.

What should I do if I see blood in my urine?
It is normal to see a few specks of blood in your urine when you are beginning ISC but it should clear up in a few days. If it continues or gets worse, contact your doctor or nurse.

What if no urine drains when catheterising?
If no urine drains when you insert your catheter, gently remove the catheter and contact your doctor or nurse.

Does ISC hurt?
It shouldn’t be painful to catheterise but may experience a strange sensation at first. Some people find that their urethras can become very sensitive when first learning ISC. This should settle with time but if it bothers you too much, contact your doctor or nurse.

Will ISC affect my sex life?
ISC should affect your sex life in a positive way. You should be able to maintain a sexual relationship without embarrassing leakage or discomfort. If you have any concerns, discuss this with your doctor or nurse.

Gently pull your foreskin back (if you have one). Hold your penis up towards your stomach. In position, your urethra is extended and becomes U-shaped. This will make it easier to guide your catheter into your bladder.

Do not squeeze your penis too hard as this can block the opening of your urethra.

Slide your catheter slowly and smoothly into the opening of your urethra and into your bladder until the urine starts to flow.

If you find it hard to insert your catheter, it may be helpful to cough or try to pass urine as this will be sometimes make it easier.
When the urine stops flowing, hold your penis up towards your stomach again and slowly withdraw the catheter to remove the last few drops.

If using ‘option 2’ put the catheter back in its packaging and place it in a rubbish bin. DO NOT flush catheters down the toilet. When using public toilets, try to dispose of your catheter in the yellow bins. Always finish by washing your hands with soap and water.

Questions and Answers

How may times a day should I carry out ISC?
This varies from person to person and will be decided when you are taught ISC. It will depend on the amount of urine you pass each time or the amount you drain using the catheter can also be affected by your specific bladder problem and certain medications. At first, your ISC teacher may ask you to keep a urine record and will give you advice on this.

How often should I wash?
To avoid washing away the natural bacteria that protect us from infection, it is recommended that you wash your genital area once a day with mild soap and water. You can use disposable wet or dry wipes if you like and you can shower and bathe as normal.

It is a good idea to clean your genital area when catheterising after a bowel movement.

What if I can't insert or withdraw the catheter?
Don't worry! This usually because you are tense and the sphincter muscle is not relaxed, so relax and try again. Coughing may also help to loosen the catheter in or out. If you are still having problems, contact your doctor or nurse for advice.

Never try to cut a catheter if you are having problems inserting or withdrawing it. Always contact your doctor or nurse.

Do my bowel habits affect catheterising?
It is always best to avoid becoming constipated as this may interfere with your ISC. Try to eat a well balanced diet with plenty of fruit and vegetables. If you so become constipated, speak to your doctor or nurse.