Suprapubic Catheters

A suprapubic catheter is a hollow flexible tube that is used to drain urine from the bladder. It is inserted into the bladder through a cut in the tummy, an inch or two below your navel (belly button). This is done under a local anesthetic, or a light general anesthetic.

Why do I need a suprapubic catheter?
Anyone who cannot empty their bladder may need a catheter. A suprapubic catheter may be chosen because it is more comfortable and are sometimes easier to change. Suprapubic catheters are sometimes used for the following reasons:

> *Urethral trauma (damage that has been caused to the urethra – the tube where urine comes out).
> *People who require long-term catheterization and are sexually active
> *After some gynecological operations
> *Some wheelchair bound people find this method simpler
> *People who cannot perform self-catheterization
> *Long-term catheterization for incontinence. Although this is not recommended, sometimes medical staff or the patient feel it is appropriate to avoid skin problems or other medical complications or for a better quality of life.

What happens to the urine?
Free drainage: where the urine drains out of the catheter and into a drainage bag.

Who inserts a suprapubic catheter?
The doctor will insert your first suprapubic catheter during the initial operation. A small balloon at the tip of the catheter is inflated to prevent it from falling out. Initially the catheter should stay in for 4-6 weeks without being removed. It will have a stitch to help hold it in place. If the catheter comes out before that time period the hole will close up quickly. A doctor or nurse can change the catheter in your home or urology office. You or a member of your family may also be taught to change the catheter after the first time. You must not try to remove the catheter without medical advice.

How often does a catheter need changing?
The first catheter change is usually done after 4-6 weeks from the insertion. After this it can vary from 4-12 week intervals depending on the type of catheter and your own situation.

What do I do with the drainage bag?
There are two kinds of bags: a leg bag and a bag used while you are sleeping. A leg bag is worn under your normal clothes during the day – it is held in place by a strap. There are different makes of leg bags and this is okay. A night drainage bag is much larger and holds all the urine that drains from the bladder overnight. Sometimes the tube can be plugged for 2 hours with a catheter plug.

How do I look after my suprapubic catheter?
Always wash your hands before and after emptying your catheter bag. After the operation to insert your suprapubic catheter, you should wash the area around the insertion site with soap and water daily.

A dressing will cover the wound after the operation and you should keep it in place until the wound has healed or you are told to remove it.

It is better to take showers rather that baths as sitting in water is not good for the site. Wash with soap and water. Avoid using scented products as these can irritate the area.

Will I still be able to have sex?
Yes. A suprapubic catheter should not get in the way of sexual activity.

What kind of problems should I watch for?
    *The catheter falls out – call your doctor's office
    *Urine is not draining out of the catheter
    *You feel pain, fever and abdominal discomfort
    *Urine is leaking around the catheter – this can be normal when the catheter is new
    *The area around the catheter becomes red and sore
    *There is bleeding

If you notice something unusual or you feel poorly, contact your doctor or nurse.

Will I have to change my eating and drinking habits?
To prevent urinary infections and encourage drainage, you should drink lots of fluids (about 2 liters daily), water and fruit juice is fine, especially cranberry juice as this can help prevent bladder infections. Also taking Vitamin C, 50 mg, 3 times a day can help prevent bladder infections. Try to avoid constipation – make sure that you include whole wheat bread, fruits, and vegetables in your diet.