

Clean Intermittent Self-Catheterization for People with Vulvas

What is clean intermittent self-catheterization (CIC)?

Clean intermittent self-catheterization (CIC) is a way to empty your bladder using a **catheter** (a thin, flexible tube). You will do this at regular times as instructed by your doctor.

Why do I need to do CIC?

You need to do CIC because your bladder does not empty completely, or it does not empty at all, on its own.

- Some people only need to do CIC for a short time (for example, right after bladder surgery). Some conditions may require a person to do CIC for a longer period of time.
- Doing CIC will help you keep your bladder empty and decrease the chances of bladder infection.
- Some people do CIC instead of wearing a continuously draining catheter.

How often do I need to do CIC?

- Your health care provider will let you know how often you need to do CIC. Some people may need to catheterize 2-4 times a day, and others will need to catheterize as often as every 4-6 hours.
- When it is time to empty your bladder, you may have a feeling of fullness or you may feel the need to urinate (pee) but you aren't able to. There are some patients who know they need to empty their bladder through signs like feeling restless, sweating, chills, or getting a headache.
- Generally, you will need to catheterize often enough to keep the amount of urine (pee) you drain from the catheter below 10-14 ounces.

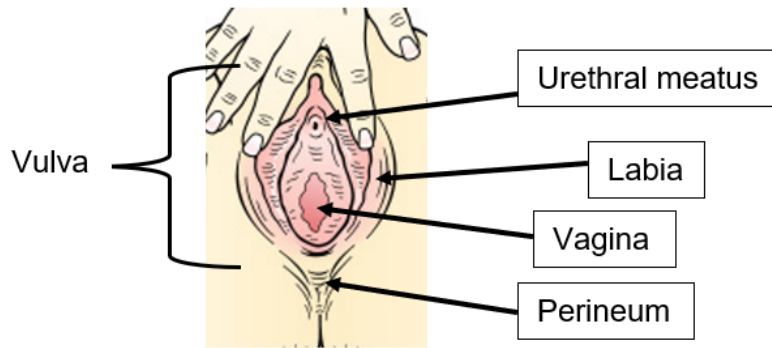
- It is important that you get into a routine with your CIC. We may give you a “bladder diary,” where you will keep track of the time you pee or catheterize and how many ounces of urine has drained (with either peeing or catheterizing).
 - After you get into a good routine, you won’t need to continue to measure your urine. This could take several weeks or several months. Everyone is different. Your doctor will let you know when you can stop measuring your urine.

What supplies will I need for CIC?

- A catheter (that will be prescribed by your doctor)
- A clean, dry storage container to store the catheter (if it is being reused)
- Water-soluble lubricating jelly, such as K-Y® Jelly (do not use petroleum jelly like Vaseline®)
- A moist towelette or a washcloth to clean the perineum
- Liquid antibacterial soap without moisturizer or perfume, and water
- A toilet, urinal, bag, or basin for draining and measuring the urine
- A small mirror to help you locate the urethral meatus (this is optional)
- A clean surface to place your supplies on

Body parts to know for CIC:

- **Vulva:** the whole genital area, including the labia, urethral meatus, and vagina.
- **Urethral meatus:** the opening to the urethra which leads to the bladder.
- **Perineum:** the area between the vulva and the anus.
- **Labia:** the folds of skin around the urethral meatus and vagina.



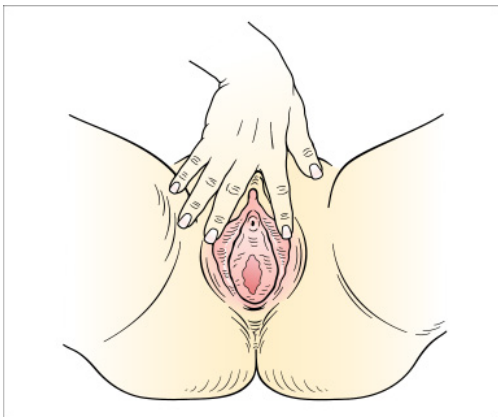
How do I catheterize myself?

Getting started:

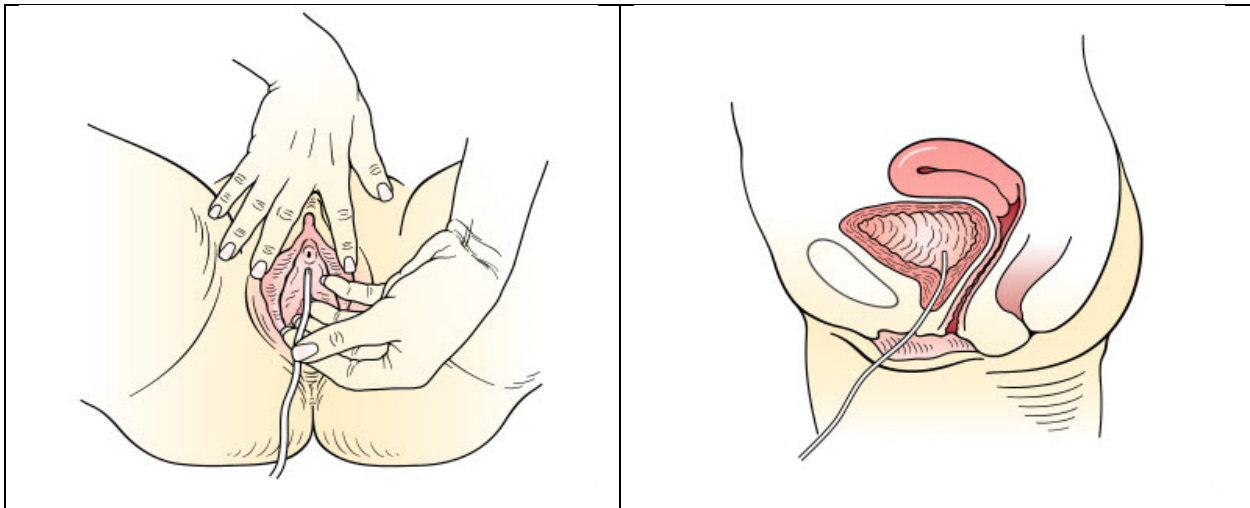
1. Wash your hands with warm water and soap, and dry with a clean towel.
2. Place your supplies on a clean surface within reach.
3. Open the catheter package and put the water-soluble jelly on the tip of the catheter.
4. Sit and position yourself so that your knees are apart, leaning back slightly. You may also stand facing the toilet, with one foot up on the toilet seat.
5. Clean your perineum from front to back (using the antibacterial soap on a washcloth, or with a moist towelette).

Steps for catheterization:

1. With one hand, spread your labia apart.



2. Locate the urethral meatus. You can use a mirror, or you can find it by feeling with your fingertip.
 - If you are using a mirror, place the mirror between your thighs and adjust it as needed so you can see.
 - If you are not using a mirror, hold the labia apart with your pointer finger and ring finger. Then find the urethral meatus with the middle finger of the same hand.
3. Using your other hand, slowly and gently insert the catheter into the urethral meatus in an upward direction. Make sure that the end of the catheter is positioned properly for the urine container (toilet, urinal, bag, or basin) to collect urine.



4. Once you see urine flow, insert the catheter one more inch.
5. Keep the catheter in your bladder until the urine stops flowing. The urine container should be lower than your bladder to help with urine drainage.
6. Once the urine flow stops, slowly remove the catheter. Stop each time you see more urine flow, so you can completely empty the bladder.
7. If you are using a single-use catheter, you can throw out the catheter. If it is not a single-use catheter (meaning that you are reusing the same catheter), place the catheter in a clean, dry storage container and clean it.

Your health care provider will give you instructions on properly caring for and storing catheters.

8. Wipe your perineum from front to back to clean off any extra lubricant.
9. When you're completely finished, wash your hands with soap and water.

Important things to remember for CIC:

- When you are leaving home, take several catheters with you (so you will have one available if you need to catheterize more than once).
- Make sure to follow your doctor's instructions for how to catheterize.
- Always wash your hands before and after self-catheterization.
- If your routine is to catheterize every 3-4 hours, make sure your first catheterization is first thing in the morning and your last catheterization is just before you go to bed.
- If you are regularly getting urine amounts of more than 14 ounces during your first CIC in the morning, you should catheterize once during the night. You may need to set an alarm to wake yourself up for CIC during the night.
- Drinking enough fluids is important for bladder health. Do not drink less fluid to decrease your need for self-catheterization.
- Call your doctor if you have trouble moving the catheter into your bladder.
- Do not press down on your bladder to empty it. Your bladder will drain by gravity. Hard pressure on your bladder may push your urine back into your kidneys.

Who do I contact if I need more information?

- If you have any questions, please contact the Michigan Medicine Department of Urology at (734) 936-7030 on Monday through Friday between 8:00 AM - 5:00 PM.

Department of Urology
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- After business hours or on weekends, please call (734) 936-6267 and ask to speak with the urology resident on call.

What do I need to watch for?

Signs of infection:

Call your doctor if you have any of these signs of a possible infection:

- Bad-smelling urine
- Cloudy urine
- Change in the color of your urine, or blood in your urine
- Fever of 101° F or higher

Along with calling your doctor, increase your fluid intake if you have any of these symptoms. Remember that you will need to increase the number of times you catheterize yourself as well.

More urgent concerns:

For people with a high spinal cord injury, a bladder that is too full can also cause extremely high blood pressure and headache. This can lead to severe complications. If you have a high spinal cord injury and get a severe headache, empty your bladder immediately.

- If you go to the emergency room (ER), please ask the ER doctor to contact the Michigan Medicine urology resident on call for support.

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