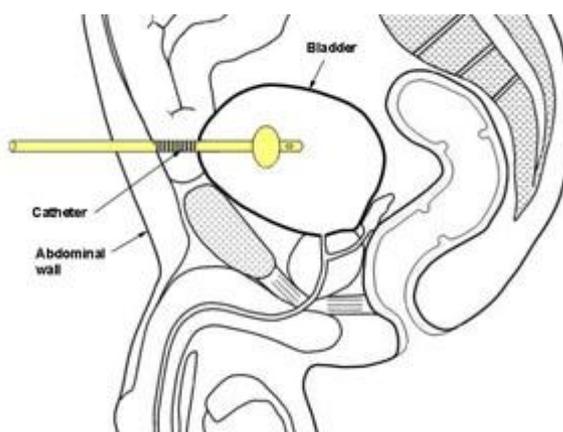


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## Permanent suprapubic catheterisation in men: frequently-asked questions

### 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 these are set out 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)
- the risk of catheter blockages
- the risk of 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 obvious advantage of suprapubic catheters is that it is usually, but not always, significantly easier to change a suprapubic catheter than a urethral

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

Urethral catheters usually need to be changed by a District Nurse or a Doctor whilst it is much more likely that a carer, or possibly the patient himself, can change a suprapubic catheter.

## **Are there any other advantages?**

There are two further advantages of suprapubic catheters over urethral catheters.

Over a period of years, a urethral catheter can put pressure on the exit point of the water pipe from the penis, and produce a split (which can sometimes be very lengthy) in the end of the penis. This can be a nuisance, but not more serious.

What is more serious is that a similar split can sometimes occur in the valve which holds urine in the bladder (the sphincter). If this occurs, leakage around the catheter may occur and this can be extremely difficult to treat.

In men who are sexually active a suprapubic catheter leaves the male genitalia free for this purpose.

## **Who can I contact for more help or information?**

### **Oncology Nurses**

- Uro-Oncology Nurse Specialist  
01223 586748
- Bladder cancer Nurse Practitioner (haematuria, chemotherapy & BCG)  
01223 274608
- Prostate cancer Nurse Practitioner  
01223 274608

### **Non-Oncology Nurses**

- Urology Nurse Practitioner (incontinence, urodynamics, catheter patients)  
01223 274608 or 586748

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## **Patient Advice & Liaison Centre (PALS)**

- Telephone  
+44 (0)1223 216756 or 257257  
+44 (0)1223 274432 or 274431
- 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  
derek.fraser@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 274604

## **Access Office (travel, parking & security information)**

- Telephone  
+44 (0)1223 586969

## **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.

## **How can I get information in alternative formats?**

Please ask if you require this information in other languages, large print or audio format: 01223 216032 or [patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk](mailto:patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk)

### **Polish**

Informacje te można otrzymać w innych językach, w wersji dużym drukiem lub audio. Zamówienia prosimy składać pod numerem: 01223 216032 lub wysyłając e-mail: [patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk](mailto:patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk)

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- Russian** Если вам требуется эта информация на другом языке, крупным шрифтом или в аудиоформате, пожалуйста, обращайтесь по телефону 01223 216032 или на вебсайт  
[patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk](mailto:patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk)
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- Turkish** Bu bilgiyi diger dillerde veya büyük baskılı ya da sesli formatta isterseniz lütfen su numaradan kontak kurun: 01223 216032 veya asagıdaki adrese e-posta gönderin:  
[patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk](mailto:patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk)
- Bengali** এই তথ্য বাংলায়, বড় অক্ষরে বা অডিও টেপে পেতে চাইলে দয়া করে 01223 216032 নম্বরে ফোন করুন বা [patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk](mailto:patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk) ঠিকানায় ই-মেইল করুন।



Addenbrooke's is smoke-free. You cannot smoke anywhere on the site. Smoking increases the severity of some urological diseases and increases the risk of post-operative complications. For advice on quitting, contact your GP or the NHS smoking helpline free on 0800 169 0 169

## Document history

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First published	May 2005
Review date	April 2014
File name	Permanent suprapubic catheterisation in men
Version number	6.0
Ref	04/Info_04_11