Specialist Continence Advisory Service

Local Partnerships

Patient Information Leaflet Number 18

Male Intermittent Self Dilatation (ISD) Helpful Tips

Information about urethral dilatation for male patients
What is a urethral stricture?

A urethral stricture is a narrowing caused by scarring of the lining of the urethra. Strictures can range from less than 1cm long to those that extend the entire length of the urethra. They can occur at any point along the urethra, but are most often seen in the bulbar region.

What are the risks of leaving a stricture untreated?

A stricture can act as a “bottleneck” in the urethra which prevents complete bladder emptying. This can cause you to retain urine in your bladder after you pass urine, which can result in bladder, prostate or kidney infections, and lead to the formation of stones. All these conditions can cause long-term bladder damage and kidney failure. Passing a lubricated catheter down the urethra on a regular basis can prevent the stricture from reforming.

What symptoms might I have with a urethral stricture?

With minor strictures, you may not have any symptoms. With tighter strictures, you may experience one or more of the following:
- poor urinary flow and needing to strain to pass urine;
- spraying or splitting of the urinary stream;
- dribbling of urine after urination;
- needing to pass urine often (urinary frequency);
• urinary tract infections;
• reduced force of ejaculation and low ejaculate volume;
• pain on passing urine.

What is Intermittent Self Dilatation (ISD)?

Intermittent Self Dilatation (ISD) is when you pass a plastic tube called a catheter, down your urethra to keep your stricture from closing over. When this is completed, the catheter is then removed.

Why do I have to do (ISD)?

Intermittent self-dilatation is done to prevent reoccurrence of narrowing (stricture) in the urethra. If you do not perform ISD as often as instructed then your stricture may reform and further surgery may be needed. If your urine flow slows down over time, then the frequency to perform ISD may need to be increased.

How often do I need to perform ISD

You will be advised by your healthcare professional when to start Intermittent Self Dilatation and how often you should repeat the therapy. Your ISD regime is

How to perform ISD

1. Wash your hands with soap and water and prepare your catheter. Find a suitable position, either sitting or standing. If you are not near a toilet, have a container at hand to catch the urine.

2. Gently pull your foreskin back if you have one. Wash the end of your penis with soap and water. Hold your penis up towards your stomach. In this position, your urethra is extended and becomes U-shaped, making it easier to guide the catheter into your bladder. Do not squeeze your penis too hard as this can block the opening to your urethra.
3. You may be instructed to insert the catheter until urine comes out. If so make a slight bend in the funnel end of the catheter, so the flow of urine does not take you by surprise.

4. Slide the catheter slowly and smoothly into the opening of your urethra. The length of catheter you need to insert is dependent on where your stricture is and how far in you will have to insert the catheter.

5. Hold your penis up towards your stomach again and slowly turn the catheter a full 360 degrees (repeat again) whilst holding the catheter in place. Withdraw the catheter slowly.

6. Gently pull your foreskin back in place and dispose of the catheter in the normal way.

7. Finish by washing your hands.

**Bowel habits**

It is important that your bowels open regularly, i.e. on a daily basis. So eat a well balanced diet with plenty of fruit and vegetables. If you become constipated, consult your doctor or nurse as this may interfere with your ISD.

**How much should I drink**

You should drink at least 6-8 cups of fluid every day, 2.5 pints or 1.5 litres.
Frequently Asked Questions

What shall I do if I can’t insert the catheter?

If you have tried and failed, don’t panic. Try to relax. You might find it helpful to take a warm bath before you attempt it again. If you still cannot manage to insert catheter, contact your healthcare professional.

What shall I do if I can’t remove the catheter?

This is very uncommon but try to stay calm. Relax for 5-10 minutes and then try again. Coughing can help to relax your muscles and make removal easier.

Are there symptoms to watch out for?

If you become unwell with symptoms of fever, burning pain when voiding, cloudy malodourous urine and back pain, this could be a sign of infection and you should seek urgent medical advice.
Further Information
Further useful information can be accessed on the NHS website: www.nhs.uk

Patient Experience Team contact details:
Phone: 0115 993 4542
Email: complaints@nottshc.nhs.uk
Write to: Patient Experience Team, Moorgreen House, Highbury Hospital, Highbury Vale, Bulwell, Nottingham NG6 9DR

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