

# The Safe Patient

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## Safety When Your Loved One Has a Urinary Catheter

Often patients have to have a urinary catheter inserted into their bladder during a hospital stay, but that in-dwelling catheter can be a set up for a urinary tract infection. In fact, having a urinary catheter is the most common cause of hospital acquired infections according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

You have a catheter that goes into a body's space; sometimes bacteria can crawl along that catheter and get into the bladder and then set up an infection.

- A urinary tract infection doesn't always produce obvious symptoms, but **if you have an unexplained fever or experience burning or pain in the lower abdomen, speak to someone on your health care team** about the possibility of a catheter-associated infection.
- Guidelines to lower your risk include: **Before anyone touches your catheter, ask that they wash or sanitize their hands. Also make sure that the catheter is secured to your leg. And if you are lying in a bed, the urine bag must be placed below the bladder but not on the floor. Don't let the bag go above the bladder because the urine that's in the bag now flows back into your bladder, you want to keep in a one-way system.** Studies have shown that the longer a catheter is in the bladder, the higher the risks of infection. So **everyday, ask if it is still required for your care. Ask that they take it out as soon as possible.**

So, as important as a catheter may be for your treatment in the hospital, it's just as important it not be a cause of an infection while you are there.

