

IPC Bulletin for GP Practice Staff

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Produced by an NHS Community Infection Prevention and Control Team based in North Yorkshire for distribution to subscribers.

Understanding the risks of urinary catheters

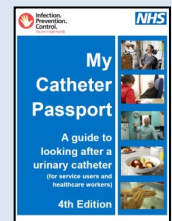
Catheter associated facts and risks:

- A urinary catheter will become colonised by bacteria (asymptomatic bacteriuria) within 48 hours
- For every day that a urinary catheter remains in situ, the risk of a catheter associated urinary tract infection (CAUTI) increases by approximately 5%
- Urinary tract infections account for around 1 in 5 of all healthcare associated infection (HCAI), with almost 50% associated with urinary catheters

For some patients, having either a short-term or long-term urinary catheter is essential. However, all catheters pose a continual and increasing risk of urine infection which can lead to life threatening complications, such as bacteraemia. Every patient should have a plan in place to review the need for their catheter.

Catheter passport

- A patient held booklet containing information relating to their urinary catheter to improve the continuity of patient care and provide advice.
- It should include whether a 'trial without catheter' (TWOC) has been attempted or where/when one is planned, if appropriate.



Recommendations

- The need for a catheter should be assessed regularly against the HOUDINI indicators.
- The last date the catheter was reviewed should be clearly documented.
- Do not dipstick urine from catheterised patients as dipsticks are unreliable in diagnosing CAUTI.
- Catheterised patients with asymptomatic bacteriuria do not require antibiotics.
- If a CAUTI is suspected, obtain a urine sample from the catheter port using an aseptic technique.
- Encourage patients to keep hydrated.

HOUDINI indicators—a guide for reviewing if a urinary catheter is necessary.

- H** - Haematuria
- O** - Obstruction
- U** - Urological/major/prolonged surgery
- D** - Decubitus ulcer (open sacral or perineal sores in an incontinent person)
- I** - Input/output monitoring (critical)
- N** - Not for resuscitation and end of life
- I** - Immobility due to physical restraints

A selection of resources for staff on urinary catheter care can be downloaded for free:

www.infectionpreventioncontrol.co.uk/resources/?filter_keyword=&filter_audience%5B%5D=gp-practices&filter_topic%5B%5D=utis

What's new—click on the links below:

- [IPC training event for General Practice: 9th June 2025](#)
- [SICPs Assurance: Annual IPC Audit Tool for General Practice](#)
- [Stop the spread of infection for General Practice Poster](#)
- [National Standards of Health Cleanliness 2021 Frequency of Cleaning Audits for General Practice: Quick reference guide](#)

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