

Continence Care following Radical Prostatectomy

Patient Information – Urology Service

What to expect after my operation?

Once you have recovered from your surgery in hospital, you will be sent home with a urinary catheter in place. This is a tube which drains urine from the bladder via a tube that comes through the urethra (tube from the bladder that empties the urine) into a bag that can be strapped to your leg or placed next to your bed. You will be sent an appointment with a continence nurse specialist to have this catheter removed 10 to 14 days after your surgery.

At this appointment you will also be informed about what to expect over the following weeks and months. It is likely that you will have some urinary incontinence (leakage of urine) when your catheter is removed and will require incontinence pads. Some will be given to you to take home, but you will also need to buy some. These are available in most pharmacies and supermarkets. There are different brands and absorbencies (including washable pants with pads) to choose from, please ask your continence nurse for further advice if required.

What happens at my appointment?

Please expect to be at this appointment for up to three hours. This is because you will be required to pass urine and have an ultrasound scan before you go home.

When you see the specialist nurse she will first check your abdominal suture line after removing the dressing.

Next your catheter will be removed after applying a lubricant/local anaesthetic jelly around the urethra. This can be temporarily uncomfortable but should not usually be painful.

Once the catheter has been removed the nurse will discuss pelvic floor muscle exercises and check that you are able to do them effectively before giving you exercises to do (please see below and the additional leaflet provided for these in more detail). It is normal to have uncontrolled leakage of urine after this surgery, so the nurse will talk to you about continence products/pads and show you how to fit them.

Please bring firm fitting underpants to wear home.

Once this has been done, the nurse will have a conversation about what to expect over the coming weeks and months. If you want to bring a support person / partner to this discussion, this is usually encouraged.

Pelvic floor muscle exercises

Once the nurse has checked you can do these exercises you will be given a regime to follow. This can be helpful in improving your continence. The movement of these pelvic floor muscles is a very slight movement (can be described as a drawing up of your testicles (“nuts to guts”) or holding in wind. You should not be tightening your stomach, thighs or buttocks.

You will be taught quick and slow exercises. The purpose of the ‘quick’ ones is to give you ‘the knack’, this is the ability to quickly tighten these muscles to close off the bladder outlet to help prevent leakage.

These exercises involve:

- Four times a day (recommended). 10 quick tightening and relaxing.

The slower ones can take time and work but will give generalised support to your bladder/urethra. These involve...

- Four times a day (recommended).
- Start by tighten the muscle and count to two. Try and do these 10 times. You may find that before you get to 10 times you notice that you don’t feel the muscle relaxing and it becomes tired. Once you can get to 10 times and are in full control, start again but holding for the count of three. Then count four and so on, up to 10 counts. Eventually in time you should be able to contract the muscle and hold for 10 counts, 10 times in succession.

Please do not try doing these exercises when you have a catheter in. If you want to start practising these before your surgery, this is highly recommended.

Urine flow

After this surgery it is important to monitor your urine flow. Initially when your catheter is removed, providing you have a good volume in your bladder, you should have a good flow. The best urination to monitor is often the first one of the day (this is often when your bladder is fullest).

If you find your urine flow is decreasing and/or it is taking longer to start the flow it may be a sign of a narrowing at the join of the bladder to the urethra (anastomosis) or scar formation in the urethra. If you are concerned about this, please contact your GP immediately. If you are not able to pass urine, please visit the Emergency Department at Christchurch or Ashburton Hospital.

General Health

- Skin care. Urine against the skin can cause soreness and irritation. It is important to keep the skin clean, dry and well moisturised. If the skin becomes red, you may need a barrier cream (seek pharmacy advice).
- Drink adequately unless advised against this by your GP.
- Eat a diet rich in fibre to prevent constipation. Do not constantly strain to pass a bowel motion. Ask for advice about laxatives if you are getting constipated.

- Returning to work will vary according to your health and the physicality of your job.
- Walks are encouraged, and activity should be gradually increased. Listen to your body! If you have an increase in pain or tiredness you may be doing too much.
- Only drive when you feel safe enough to be able to brake in a hurry and able to twist your head / body freely to look for traffic or cyclists etc. Please also refer to your car insurance policy / company.
- Do not lift heavy objects or participate in strenuous activity for approximately six weeks after your surgery.

Supplies

If you require a catheter long-term, your doctor or nurse will arrange your catheter requirements through the District Nursing Service. The District Nursing Service will contact you once they receive the referral.

If you are assessed by Nurse Maude as eligible to receive funding for your catheter supplies, you will be informed where you can collect your supplies from.

The supplies can be delivered to your home by courier for a fee. If you go on holiday, remember to inform Nurse Maude and arrange to take any supplies.

If you need additional supplies, they can be purchased from:

NURSE MAUDE HEALTH AND MOBILITY SHOP

87a Gasson Street	Monday – Friday
Sydenham	8.30 am – 4.30 pm
Christchurch 8023	Closed weekends and public holidays
(03) 375 4240	https://nursemaude.org.nz/health-and-mobility-shop/

Contact Information

If you have any concerns or questions regarding your continence or catheter, please call one of our Continence Nurse Specialists on (03) 364 0541 or (03) 364 1008.

For more information about:

- Hospital and specialist services, go to www.healthnz.govt.nz/hospitals-services/hospitals/canterbury
- Your health and medication, go to www.healthnz.govt.nz/health-topics
- Prostate Cancer Foundation of NZ, go to www.prostate.org.nz
- NZ Continence Association, go to www.continence.org.nz

For information on parking, how to get to the hospital, and visiting hours, please visit the [Christchurch Hospital](#) website.