

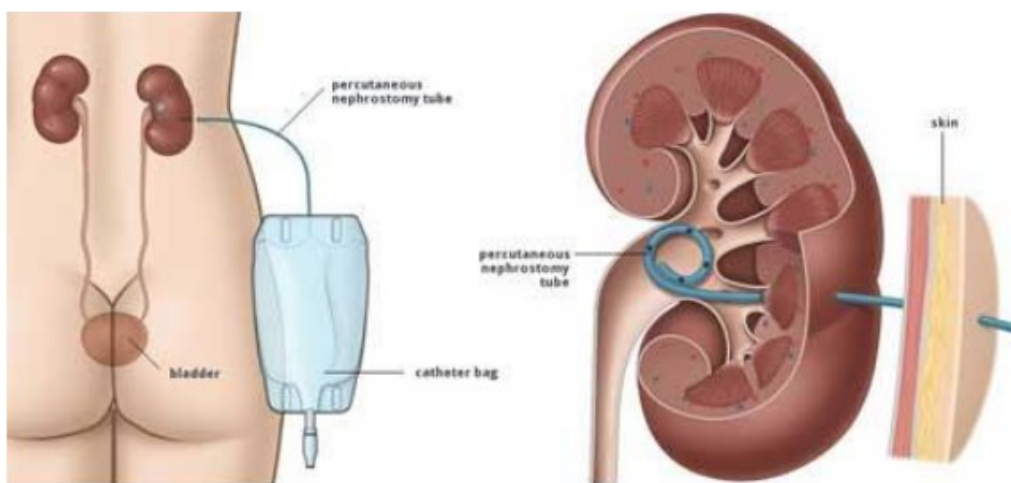
Caring for your Nephrostomy Tube at Home

What is a nephrostomy?

Urine is produced in the kidney and drains into the bladder via a narrow muscular tube called the ureter. There are many reasons why this tube can become blocked such as a stone, a tumour or injury to the urinary tract. An obstructed ureter can lead to complications such as pain, infection and kidney failure.

A nephrostomy is a thin plastic tube inserted through the skin into the kidney. Once sited the tube allows urine to drain from the kidney and diverts it to an external drainage bag. The tube is usually secured in place with a small stitch. Depending on the underlying cause of the obstruction bilateral nephrostomies (a tube into each kidney) may be required.

This procedure is typically performed within the Norfolk Centre for Interventional Radiology (NCIR) though a nephrostomy tube may also be inserted at the time of an operation for large kidney stones.



British Association of Urological Surgeons (BAUS [2021])

How long can a Nephrostomy tube stay in for?

The team who recommends the placement of a nephrostomy tube will explain how long it is likely to remain in place. This will depend on your individual situation and underlying cause of obstruction. Some patients may require permanent nephrostomy tubes which require routine exchange every 3 - 4 months. You will be contacted with an appointment for this from the appropriate department

Support with your nephrostomy tube

Prior to discharge from hospital the nursing staff will show you how to care for your nephrostomy tube and ensure you have plenty of equipment. A referral to your community nursing team will be made to support you with your bag and dressing changes once you are at home.

Looking after your nephrostomy tube

The nephrostomy tube will be attached to a drainage bag which is usually worn under your clothing and can be strapped to the thigh. It is important not to leave the bag hanging as the weight of the urine may cause the nephrostomy tube to become dislodged. We recommend that bags are not allowed to fill more than two-thirds to avoid this happening. The drainage bag and tubing need replacing every week.

The skin around the insertion site should be kept clean to prevent infection. We advise that a dressing is applied over the insertion site and changed weekly. If the dressing becomes wet or visibly soiled it will require changing. You may shower from the day after the procedure but avoid immersing the insertion site fully in water. You can protect the skin with plastic wrap during showering.

Restrictions

A nephrostomy tube can be uncomfortable particularly when you bend, stretch or climb stairs. Finding a comfortable sleeping position may prove more challenging. You may take painkillers as indicated to relieve any discomfort. If you feel severe pain, please ensure to follow the *concerns about your nephrostomy tube* guidance below.

Gentle exercise is fine but strenuous exercise or contact sports may increase the risk of your nephrostomy becoming dislodged.

Depending on your job it may be reasonable to continue working with a nephrostomy tube. You will need to discuss your individual circumstances with employer or GP. It is important to recognise any potential risks which may lead to the tube becoming damaged or dislodged.

Providing there is no severe discomfort with your nephrostomy tube there are no restrictions on driving. You should advise your insurance company however.

Fluid intake

Unless directed otherwise you should aim to drink at least 2 litres of fluid per day. Drinking alcohol with a nephrostomy tube is fine but it is recommended to drink no more than 14 units of alcohol per week spread across 3 days or more.

What if I feel I have an infection?

It is possible to develop a urinary tract infection (UTI) whilst a nephrostomy tube is in place. You may notice foul-smelling or cloudy urine in the drainage bag. Your

GP or community nurse can send a sample of urine from the nephrostomy tube if required. If you are still able to pass urine in the normal way, they may request a sample of this too. Your GP will prescribe antibiotics if they feel this is indicated.

If you develop a temperature/feel generally unwell, notice redness and/or foul-smelling discharge from around the nephrostomy insertion site please ensure to follow the *concerns about your nephrostomy tube* guidance below.

What if the nephrostomy tube stops draining?

If your nephrostomy tube stops draining check that the tube has no kinks and the drainage bag is connected correctly. If you notice any debris or blockages within the tubing this may need replacing. Ask yourself if your intake has been sufficient and try drinking an additional half a litre of fluid.

Your community nurse may be able to flush your nephrostomy if they have been trained to undertake this and have the available equipment/prescription. This is not always possible however.

If you still notice there is no output despite these methods follow the *concerns about your nephrostomy tube* guidance below.

What if I notice blood in the drainage bag?

You may notice a small amount of blood within your nephrostomy tube especially in the initial period after insertion or exchange. If you are on medication that thins your bloods such as Edoxaban, Apixaban, Rivaroxaban, Clopidogrel or Warfarin this can exacerbate bleeding.

Ensure to drink plenty of fluids and look out for any blockages within the tubing. If you are concerned about bleeding which isn't improving, follow the *concerns about your nephrostomy tube* guidance below.

Community support and equipment

The nephrostomy drainage bags and dressings you are discharged with may be different to that in the community. Below is the available equipment which your GP and community nurse should be able to source for you:

- Capatex Medical drainage bags - Bile Bag 500ml latex free non-return valve push-pull drainage connector. [Item code FSE134](#).
- GTA UK (Ltd) connecting tubing - Low Pressure Connecting Tube. Male & Female 50cm long, 2mm ID tubing. [Item code 400120019](#).
- Biatain dressing - Foam dressing silicone including adhesive border 10cm x 10cm (wcp 6.5cm x 6.5cm). [Item code ELA451](#).

- Allevyn dressing - Enhanced foam dressing adhesive including adhesive border 10cm x 10cm (wcp 6.5cm x 6.5cm). Item Code [ELA1104](#).

There is also a community service available to support with your nephrostomy tube called **Vyne**. This service has in-house healthcare specialists and nurses experienced in caring for patients with nephrostomies. They can supply additional equipment such as waist belts which may help you to secure your nephrostomy tube. Your GP or community nurse can refer you to this service or you can self-refer.

Vyne contact number: 0344 225 1519

Vyne email address: hello@vyne.co.uk

Vyne website with links to self-referral: www.vyne.co.uk

Concerns about your nephrostomy tube

If any of the following occur:

- Your nephrostomy tube comes out.
- Your nephrostomy tube stops draining.
- You develop pain, temperature/feel generally unwell, redness and/or foul-smelling discharge from around the nephrostomy insertion site.

You will need to contact the hospital, following the instructions below. If the tube has fallen out, please cover the hole in your skin with a dressing/plaster.

Monday to Friday between 9am and 5pm please call: Norfolk Centre for Interventional Radiology on 01603 286286 Extension: 5871

Monday to Friday between 5pm and 9am if you feel well – please wait until 9.00am and call Norfolk Centre for Interventional Radiology on 01603 286286 Extension: 5871

If you feel unwell, or it is the weekend please call the main hospital switchboard on 01603 286286 and ask to speak to the Surgical Bleep Holder (0001) who will liaise with the Urology team and be able to give you further advice.

James Paget Univeristy Hospital (JPUH) contact: 01493 453911

Queen Elizabeth Hospital Kings Lynn (QEHKL) contact: 01553 613075

Sources used to prepare this leaflet:

Alcohol units - NHS (www.nhs.uk)

[Norfolk and Norwich University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust » Interventional Radiology \(nnuh.nhs.uk\)](http://Norfolk%20and%20Norwich%20University%20Hospitals%20NHS%20Foundation%20Trust%20»%20Interventional%20Radiology%20(nnuh.nhs.uk))

[Percutaneous nephrostomy.pdf \(baus.org.uk\)](#)

[Vyne | Prescriptions, Shop, Medical Devices & Support](#)