

# Caring for Your Bladder after Out-Patient Surgery at Von Voigtlander Women's Hospital

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Sometimes, surgery and pain medicine (anesthetics) can affect your bladder for several hours. This information will help you care for your bladder after surgery.

## **How does surgery affect my bladder?**

- If you were pregnant, your bladder may have already lost some of its tone.
- There can be some temporary nerve issues after surgery, which decrease your sensation (the feeling that you need to urinate).
- Temporary swelling after surgery can also affect your urination.
- If urine remains in the bladder after urinating, it can cause stretching of the bladder. It can also cause damage to the muscles of the bladder. This can lead to permanent bladder injury.

## **What do I need to watch for?**

The following signs and symptoms may indicate a bladder problem.

- Trouble starting to void, or urinate, especially after surgery.
- Feeling like your bladder is not empty after urinating.
- Dribbling, or leaking urine after urination.
- Needing to urinate often, but only urinating small amounts.
- Needing to strain to start a stream of urine.
- Needing to go often through the night.
- Feeling of fullness in your lower abdomen.
- You may not have any symptoms at all.

If you feel any of the above symptoms, or if you suspect that you might have a problem with your bladder before you are discharged, call the nurse.

### **What can I do to avoid problems?**

- Try to urinate at least every 2 to 3 hours
- If you cannot urinate immediately after surgery, tell your nurse. Ask her to assess your bladder.
- If you have more than 100 ml of urine in your bladder when the nurse uses the bladder scanner (ultrasound), she should put a catheter (small tube) into your bladder to drain the urine out. The catheter can be removed after draining the urine.
  - If you need this done more than twice, you may need to have a catheter placed for longer. You may be discharged with a catheter, if needed.
- Urinate in the collection pan in the toilet. This helps us know how much you are urinating. The nurse will tell you when you no longer need to measure.

### **What if I can't urinate?**

- Try running the water in the sink. Sometimes the sound of water helps.
- Use a plastic pericare bottle to rinse your perineum with warm water.
- Try placing your hands in cold water.
- Walk around in your room, and in the hallway, often.
- Sometimes oil of peppermint works. You can put a few drops on a cotton ball and sniff it, or you can put it in the toilet water
- If you had a dense epidural—or “heavy” block, you may not have a sensation to urinate for 6-12 hours. You should ask for a catheter if you don't have any sensation.
  - If you have swelling, you can use ice packs to help decrease the swelling. Put ice packs against the swollen area (with a layer of cloth between) for 20 minutes, several times per day.

- Do not sit upright a lot, if you have swelling. Make frequent position changes, so swelling does not increase.

### **What if I am not urinating normally before I go home?**

- You can continue to following these guidelines when you go home.
- You may need to perform **Intermittent Self Catheterizations** (also called “self-cath”). If this is the case, we will give you instructions on how to **use** small in-and-out catheters to drain your bladder at set times throughout the day. This usually needs to be about every four hours. Please note the following if you need to perform self-cath:
  - Do not let your bladder get too full (no more than 600-800 ml).
  - Wash your hands well before and after doing your self-cath.
  - You can use a small hand mirror to help you find the urethra (small opening where the urine flows from).
  - Keep a record of when you did the self-cath. If you are taking pain medications, you may forget the time of the last one.
  - You will have a follow-up visit with your provider in a few days to see how you are doing.
- Occasionally, patients will need to go home with a catheter that stays in. This is so the bladder can rest.
  - Remember to wash your hands well before and after touching the catheter
  - You will have a follow-up visit with your provider soon, to see how you are doing.
- If you have problems or questions when you get home, you can call your provider’s office during office hours. You can also call OB Triage (734-764-8134) if your provider’s office is not open.

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Author: Gail Blakely, RN, Clinical Care Coordinator  
Reviewers: Ruti Volk MSI, AHIP

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