



Prescribing advice for continence appliances

Continence appliances such as urinary catheters and associated consumables are expensive products costing the NHS in Northamptonshire £3.8 million per year. As there are many similar products it is easy to select the wrong product or quantity leading to unnecessary plastic waste and increased costs. The Northamptonshire formulary for continence appliances is available on the [Primary Care Portal](#) and provides guidelines on the quantities, how long products last and order codes. Below is advice for practice staff to ensure that prescribing of appliances is appropriate. If products or amounts are outside of guideline amounts, please contact the Northamptonshire Continence Advisory Service (NCAS) for advice ncas@nhft.nhs.uk.

Practices can make simple switches to formulary brands for leg bags, night bags, straps, sleeves etc. All brands are universal fit. OptimiseRx will pop up with messages suggesting simple formulary switches for like-to-like products. Please contact the Medicines Optimisation Team for support northantsicb.medicinesoptimisationteam@nhs.net

Urinary Catheters

- Indwelling (foley) catheters - examples of brands include Rusch Brilliant Aquaflate® and Sympacath Aquaflate® hydrogel coated latex.
 - Usually changed every 12 weeks. Issue 3 catheters on the first prescription (so the patient has spares at home). Then issue enough to maintain a stock of 3 at home with subsequent orders.
 - One anaesthetic lubricant gel (e.g. Optilube active®) should be supplied with each catheter.
- Intermittent catheters – examples of brands include Speedicath® and Lofric®.
 - Single use for bladder drainage or urethral dilatation. Use ranges from 1 catheter every 2 weeks to up to 7 times a day. If a patient orders more than 210 catheters per month this could indicate a clinical concern. GP to review in the first instance, then consider contacting NCAS for advice.

Leg bags and catheter valves

Indwelling catheters will be connected to a leg bag or a catheter valve and are sterile. All brands of bags and valves are universal fit. They can be changed to the formulary brand and the patient should not have problems connecting to their catheter.

- Catheter valves – patient will open the tap on the valve intermittently to drain the bladder. Valves are changed weekly. Available in packs of 5, prescribe 1 pack every 35 days.
- Leg bags – sterile leg bags are connected to the catheter to collect urine. The patient drains the leg bag when the bag is two-thirds full. Available as long tube or short tube and different volumes, depending on patient preference. Leg bags are changed every 5 to 7 days and a box of 10 bags will last 2 months. The formulary brands of leg bags are supplied with sterile gloves so are preferred to other non-formulary brands.

The patient should be contacted if catheter bags or valves are being ordered too frequently, to check if they are having problems and understand how the products should be used. Changing a leg bag or valve more often than recommended can put the patient at greater risk of infection.

This edition is also available on the Primary Care Portal



Night bags

Night bags are attached to the bottom of the leg bag each night to allow overnight capacity. Night bags are available as either single use or sterile.

- Single use night bags - preferred option for most patients. These are non-sterile (examples of brands include Prosys® single use non-sterile night bags, Simpla® S2 non-drainable night bags). Prescribe 30 bags per month. Some single use night bags have a tap and some have to be torn open to empty. Single use night bags must never be connected directly to the catheter, they must be connected to a leg bag or catheter valve.
- Sterile night bags – used for some patients when it is their preference, bed-bound patients and some sheath patients. Changed every 5 to 7 days. 1 box of 10 to be issued every 2 months. Contact the patient if being ordered too frequently to check they understand how often to change the night bag.

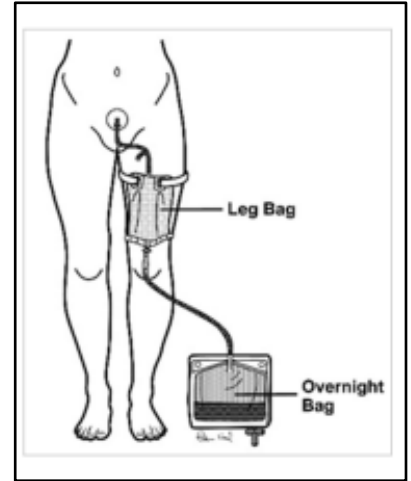


Figure 1 Diagram of night bag connected to leg bag

Additional appliances for catheter support

- Leg bag straps - used to hold the leg bag in position on the leg. They are included in the box of leg bags if prescribing a formulary brand. These should not routinely be prescribed as separate items.
- Leg bag sleeves – some patients may prefer a leg bag sleeve to hold their leg bag in position. These are washed and re-used so should only be prescribed every 3-4 months
- Catheter retaining straps – used to hold the catheter tube in place, this is different to the leg bag straps. These are washed and re-used and so should only be prescribed every 4-6 months.



Image: Manfred Sauer UK

Figure 2 Photo showing catheter strap and leg bag with leg bag straps