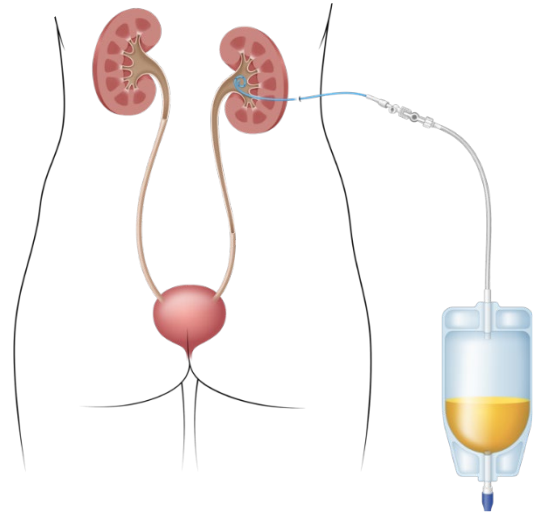


# Nephrostomy Tube Care: Discharge Instructions

## What procedure did I have done?

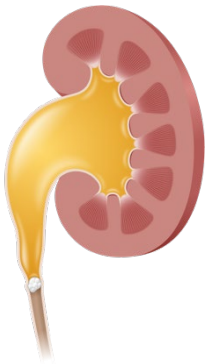
You had a **percutaneous nephrostomy tube (PCN)** placed. A nephrostomy tube is a thin catheter placed into your kidney through your back to drain urine (pee) out of your body.

- You may have 1 tube in a kidney or 2 tubes (one in each kidney).
- The urine collects in a bag attached to the tube. In most cases, the bag can be secured (attached) to your leg and has a valve that lets you drain the urine into the toilet or other container.

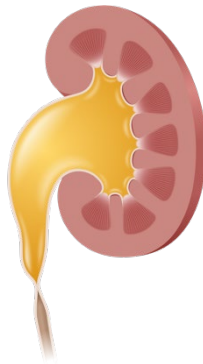


## Why is this procedure performed?

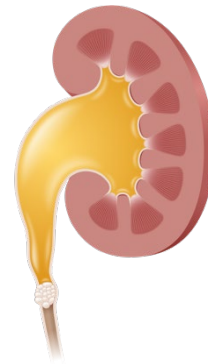
A nephrostomy tube may be placed because of a blockage or hole in your urinary tract. This may be caused by a kidney stone, infection, scar tissue, **stricture** (narrowing of the tube, called the **ureter**, that carries urine from the kidney to the bladder), or a tumor.



Stone



Stricture



Tumor

## **When do I get my tube changed or removed?**

- Typically, your tube stays in place until the blockage is fixed.
- You will need to have your tube checked and exchanged (switched out for a new tube) usually every 6-8 weeks. Your doctor may recommend a shorter or longer time between exchanges as needed.
- If you did not have a tube change appointment scheduled when you were discharged from the hospital, please call our office at **(734) 936-4500, press option 1 then 5**, to schedule your tube change appointment.
- Your urologist and interventional radiologist can help you decide if or when you can have your tube removed.

## **What should I expect after the procedure?**

- You may have some clear or yellow drainage (leaking fluid) around the tube site, or some blood in the drainage bag, for a few days. This is normal and should get better over time.
- If you have only 1 tube, you still need to urinate (pee) in a toilet. This is because your other kidney will still make urine that will drain into your bladder.
- Having a nephrostomy tube in your body for a long time increases your risk of getting an infection. **It is important to take care of your tube and come to all your appointments to prevent an infection.**

## **How do I take care of my tube to prevent an infection?**

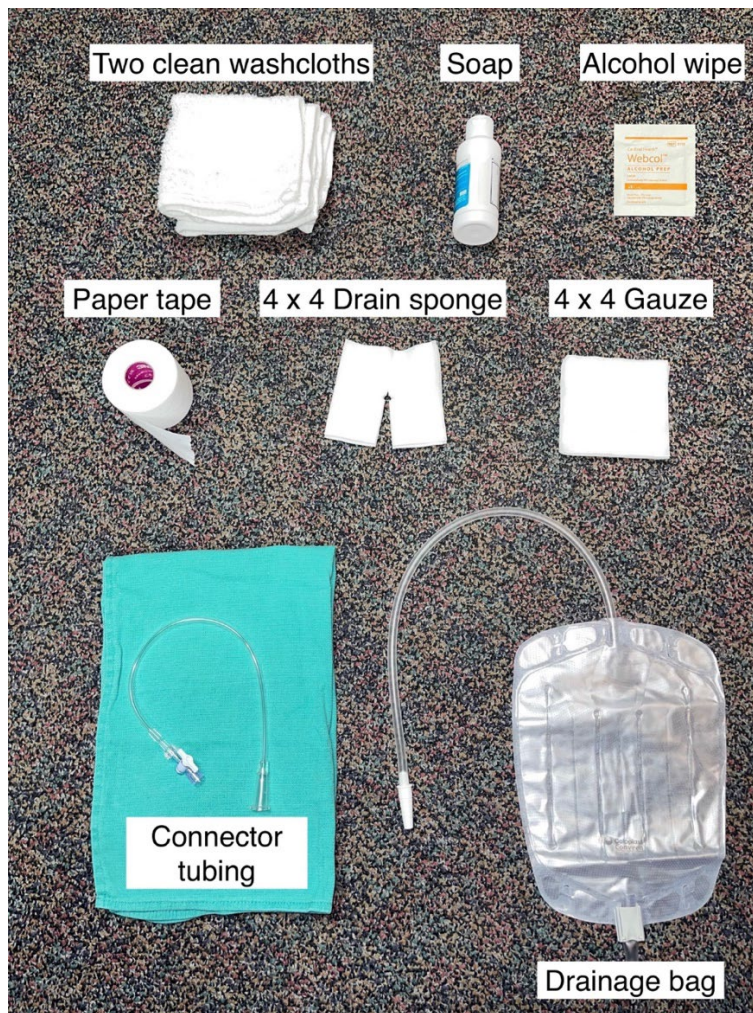
- Wash your hands before you handle the nephrostomy tube.
- Clean the area around the tube with soap and water every day.
- Change your dressing every 3 days, after showering, or if it gets dirty or wet.

**Steps for changing your dressing:**

1. Wash your hands.
2. Remove the old dressing.
3. Clean around the tube with a clean washcloth, using mild liquid soap and water.
4. Rinse the area well under running water or with a clean wet washcloth.
5. Pat the area dry with a second clean washcloth.
6. Apply a new, clean drain sponge and gauze pad. Secure it with tape. Be careful to position the tube so that it does not kink.



**Supplies you'll need for dressing and drainage bag changes:**



## How do I take care of the drainage bag?

- Leave your tube draining to a bag unless you were told to put a cap on it.
- Keep the bag below the tube to avoid urine draining back into the kidney.
- Empty the bag before it gets full (or every 2-3 hours).
- Put on a new drainage bag every 7 days. Use an alcohol swab or wipe to clean the end of the connector before reconnecting a bag.
- It is important to make sure you order and attach a new, clean bag every 7 days. However, if it is time for you to change your bag and you do not have a new bag, you can clean the bag (after disconnecting it from the tube) and then reattach it.
  - Use another container, like a basin, to collect your urine while you clean the bag.
  - To clean the bag, fill it with 2 parts vinegar to 3 parts water, and let it sit for 20 minutes. After 20 minutes, empty the vinegar and water mixture from the bag and let it air dry. Once the bag is dry, you can reconnect it to your tube.

## What activities should I avoid while I have a nephrostomy tube?

- Avoid any activity that causes a pulling sensation around the tube, pain around the tube, or kinking (bending or folding) of the tube.
- Avoid activities such as bending forward or lifting heavy objects, as this may cause leaking around the tube.
- Avoid putting creams or ointments around the tube insertion site (where the tube enters your body) unless your doctor tells you to.

## Can I shower or take a bath with a nephrostomy tube?

Avoid submerging the tube in any type of water including tubs, hot tubs, pools, oceans, ponds, or rivers, as this could lead to an infection.



**Instructions for showering during the first 2 weeks after your tube is placed:**

- Before taking a shower, cover the dressing with a double layer of plastic wrap and tape the edges of the plastic wrap to your skin.
- After the shower, remove the plastic wrap and change your dressing.



**Instructions for showering after the first 2 weeks after your tube is placed (or after the tube insertion site is healed):**

- You may shower without the dressing or plastic wrap using soap and water. Rinse well. Pat the area dry and put on a clean, dry dressing after your shower.
- If you prefer, you can sit in a bathtub instead of shower, as long as the water level is well below where the tube enters your body.

**What can I eat while I have a nephrostomy tube?**

- You can eat your normal diet. If your stomach is upset, try bland, low-fat foods like plain rice, toast, and yogurt.
- Drink plenty of fluids (unless your doctor tells you not to).

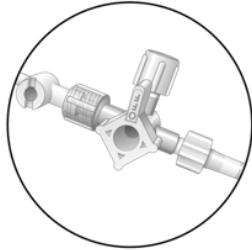
**What medications should I take?**

- You can take your normal prescription medications as your doctor instructed.
- You may have some pain in your back and near the tube insertion site. This should get better with time and may improve with over-the-counter pain medication (pain medication you can buy from a store without a prescription). Ask your provider if you can take an over-the-counter medication for your pain.

## What should I do if there is leaking around my nephrostomy tube?

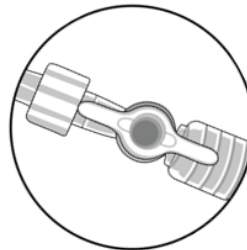
- Make sure the connection between the stopcock and tube is secure and the stopcock is in the “open to bag” or “open” position.

Three-way stopcock



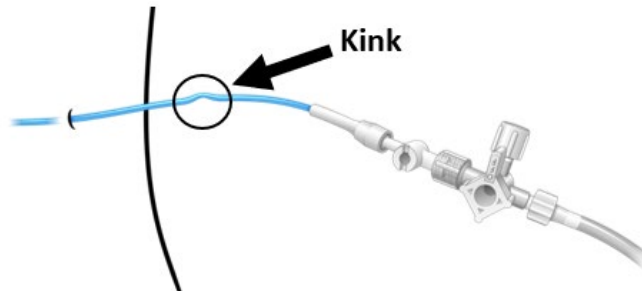
“Open to bag” position

One-way stopcock



Open position

- Make sure there is no kink in the tubing.

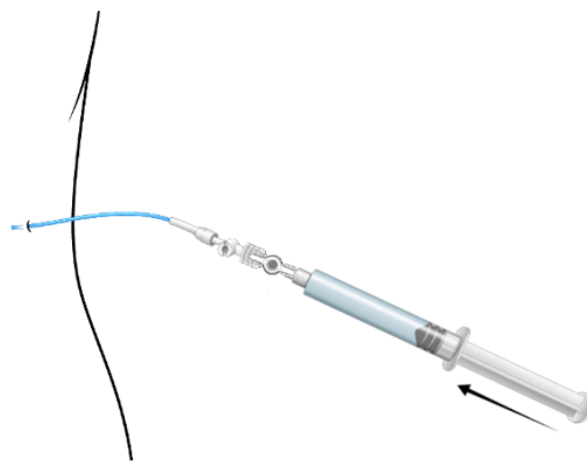


- Flush the tube (only do this if your doctor instructed you to).

Three-way stopcock



One-way stopcock



- If none of these techniques worked, call the Interventional Radiology department (the phone number is listed below).

## When should I call for help?

Call the Interventional Radiology department at (734) 936-4500, **option 1 then 5**, between 8:00 AM – 5:00 PM Monday through



Friday if you have any of these issues:

- **Your tube falls out:** If this happens, your tube must be replaced within 12-24 hours. Make sure to cover the hole in your skin with gauze pads and tape until a new tube is put in.
- **You have back pain, chills, or a fever greater than 100.3° F:** This may be a sign that you have an infection in your kidney.
- **You have strange or bad-smelling drainage or redness around the tube**
- **Your tube stops draining urine**
- **You have increased urine leaking around the tube and onto your skin and dressing**

Check out the table below for other reasons you may want to get in contact with someone, and which phone number you can use to call:

Phone number:	Time to call:	Reason to call:
(734) 936-4500, option 1 then 5	Monday – Friday 8:00 AM – 5:00 PM	Call if you have any issues with the tube or you need to schedule a clinic appointment.
(734) 936-4500, option 1 then 5	Monday – Friday 8:00 AM – 5:00 PM	Call to schedule your tube exchange if you did not get an appointment time.
(734) 936-6267	After hours (between 5:00 PM - 8:00 AM weekdays or on weekends)	You need to reach the interventional radiologist on-call for an issue with your tube. The operator will connect you to the on-call doctor.
911	Anytime	Call if you think you need emergency care. For example, you need to call if: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You have shortness of breath</li> <li>• You have chest pains</li> <li>• You passed out (lost consciousness)</li> </ul>

## How do I send a message to my care team?

To send a message to your care team, log in to your online patient portal at [MyUofMHealth.org](https://MyUofMHealth.org).

1. Click on the tab at the top of the page that says “Messages.”
2. When the Message Center opens, click “Send a message” and click the button that applies to your question type.
3. Select the provider you want to send your message to, write the subject of the message, and write your question in the space provided.
4. When you are finished, you can attach an image or click “Send.”

You will usually get an answer back within 3 business days. Please note that the online patient portal should not be used for urgent situations. Go to your nearest medical center if you need immediate medical help, or call 911 if it is an emergency.

## Where can I find video resources on caring for my nephrostomy tube?

To watch a video on caring for your nephrostomy tube, please scan the QR code or click on this link: [Bit.ly/MM-NephrostomyTubeCareVideo](https://Bit.ly/MM-NephrostomyTubeCareVideo)



Disclaimer: This document contains information and/or instructional materials developed by University of Michigan (U-M) Health for the typical patient with your condition. It may include links to online content that was not created by U-M Health and for which U-M Health does not assume responsibility. It does not replace medical advice from your health care provider because your experience may differ from that of the typical patient. Talk to your health care provider if you have any questions about this document, your condition, or your treatment plan.

Author: Michelle Shnayder-Adams, MD MPH  
Reviewers: Sarah Abate, Christopher Centonze, MD, Patricia Coristine, NP, Kaitlin McDonald, BSN RN, Amber Liles, MD MPH, William Sherk, MD  
Edited by: Brittany Batell, MPH MSW CHES®  
Illustrations created by Danielle Dobbs

Patient Education by [U-M Health](https://U-M Health) is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International Public License](https://Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International Public License). Last revised 06/2024