Urinary retention is a serious risk of Underactive Bladder and patients must be willing and prepared to self-catheterize.

Your doctor can show you how to use your catheter. After some practice, it will get easier. Sometimes family members, a school nurse, or others may be able to help you use your catheter.

Your doctor will give you a prescription for the right catheter for you. There are different types and sizes. You can buy catheters at medical supply stores. You will also need small plastic bags and a gel such as K-Y jelly or Surgilube. Do not use Vaseline (petroleum jelly). Because of the sensitivity and pain in the region, most patients must use a prescription numbing jelly such as lidocaine jelly that numbs nerve pain.

Ask your doctor how often you should empty your bladder with your catheter. Usually it is three to six times a day. Always try to empty your bladder first thing in the morning and when you go to bed at night. You can empty your bladder while sitting on a toilet. Your doctor or nurse can show you how to do this correctly.

**Catheter Sizes**

Catheters are sized by French size (Fr). The French size refers to the diameter of the catheter. Typically sizes range from 5 Fr - 20 Fr. Your physician can determine which catheter French size is right for you.

**Catheter Lengths**

There are three different lengths available for catheters: male, female, and pediatric. Most male length catheters are 16 inches in length, and female length catheters range from 6-8 inches in length. There are some instances where females prefer to use male-length catheters. Pediatric length catheters typically range from 6-12 inches in length. Women and children generally use shorter lengths because of their shorter urethral length.

**Catheter Tips**
Catheters can have a straight tip or a coude tip. Most catheters come with a straight tip but sometimes a coude tip is recommended by your physician. The coude tip catheter is used when a blockage or stricture is present, making the use of a straight catheter more difficult.

**Catheter Types**

**Straight catheters** are a straight tube of flexible plastic or rubber. One end has a rounded tip, and the other end typically has a funnel end. Intermittent catheters can also come incoude tip, latex, silicone, red rubber, and antibacterial.

**Hydrophilic catheters** are coated with a hydrophilic polymer that becomes very slippery when wet to promote excellent gliding properties and provides up to 95 percent lower friction when compared to other catheters. The result is a much more comfortable insertion.

**Closed system catheters** are pre-lubricated catheters that are self contained, allowing for a sterile environment. It includes an introducer tip that allows the catheter to bypass the highest concentrations of bacteria located in the first few millimeters of the urethra, significantly reducing the risk of infection. Closed system catheters have an attached collection bag which allows for discreet cathing where facilities are not available and also has the ability to measure output.