



Intermittent Catheterization and Sexual Health

Pediatric Urology Nurse Specialists Meeting
September 12, 2024



Sexual Health and Intermittent Catheterization

- a. Participants will consider sexual health as a natural part of CIC training starting in childhood.
- b. Participants will be aware of professional, print, and video resources to support the education of staff, caregivers, and patients on the topic of sexuality and disability.
- c. Participants will be introduced to effective strategies for addressing intimacy and CIC within a clinical setting.

Check your attitude, your expectations, your bias

- What parents want to know is if their child can have sex because it is the foundation of their understanding of potential life roles, relationships, and risks.
 - Post puberty medical providers should regularly inquire if there are questions concerning sex or sexuality.
 - Girls with Spina Bifida may experience precocious puberty. 70% of women with SB can conceive and carry to term.
- Stick to developmentally appropriate sexual health facts: How does the body work? How do you accommodate when differently abled? Who has the scope of practice to address identified issues?
- Set healthy boundaries and be clear about the scope of your qualifications. Build a team. Refer for counseling when there are questions of sexual identity, sexual partner preferences, bullying or abuse concerns.

A word about related issues...

- 26.7% [Range: 10.9 – 42.5% across studies] report satisfaction improvement after augmentation/ urinary diversion as measured by the Global Better Sex Survey.
- Fecal incontinence dramatically decreases satisfaction.
- Urine pregnancy test has a 57% FALSE POSITIVE in women with cystoplasty. They should be educated to request serum human chorionic gonadotropin.

Plan ahead: Care Before, During, and After Sex

Before sex:

- You should always empty your bladder first. A full bladder contributes to the condition for bacteria to settle in the bladder begin to grow. Wash your genital area or shower to wash away bacteria.

During sex:

- Keep a water-soluble gel (lubricant) on hand to help decrease friction and stress on the tissue in the genital area, which may contribute to a urinary tract infection (UTI). NOTE: The use of diaphragms and spermicides can sometimes cause irritation in the genital area, which may also promote UTIs. If frequent UTIs related to sexual activity, consider another form of birth control.

After sex:

- Empty your bladder immediately after having sex, even though there is only a small amount of urine in your bladder to flush out potential bacteria. Drink 2-3 glasses of water and urinate when you have the urge to do so. The goal is to have a good steady stream of urine to wash any bacteria from the bladder.

Pesky leaks...

People cope with their bladder issues when it comes to sex in different ways including:

- Laughing about it
- Having sex in the shower or bathtub.
- Connecting intimately in other ways like massage
- Padding the bed with sheets
- Try some new positions

Application in the clinical setting

- Create an environment that **invites questions**.
- Expect all staff to **respond positively** and to know who in your system can help.
- **Invest in resources** – samples, books, videos, orientation PPTs for staff, families, and patients.
- Find your local human sexuality **experts**-
 - Occupational Therapy addresses activities of daily living including environmental adaptations and assistive technologies.
 - Physical Therapy can help with bed mobility, positioning, safe
 - Social Workers can address housing, privacy, abuse concerns, test for level of understanding.
 - Psychologists can address anxiety, confidence and agency, questions of sexuality.

Inform yourself & Build your reference library

- **Link, PW, et al.** “Sexual satisfaction of men and women using intermittent catheterization.” *Journal of Sex and Marital Therapy* 12.2 (1986): 107-115.
- **McMahon, S, et al.** “Maintaining a healthy sex life with intermittent catheterization: A guide for men and women.” *Spinal Cord Injury Association*. 2018.
- **National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases.** “Intermittent catheterization.” 2023.
- **Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS).** “Sexuality and bladder control.” 2023.
- These references provide information on the benefits and challenges of intermittent catheterization, as well as tips for maintaining a healthy sex life while using IC.