



## Intimacy tips for ISC users

When you have a bladder condition, you may worry about leakage, odour or discomfort during intimacy, not to mention your self-image. We would always advise you to catheterise before sexual activity so you're more comfortable. If you find being intimate difficult or you're feeling anxious, be open with your partner about how you feel. Do what you feel comfortable with, and show your partner that you care for them. In this factsheet, we provide some tips on how you can be intimate in a way that works for you.



### Talk to your partner

It's so important to talk to your partner and be open about any concerns you have. Talking through what you're comfortable with is an important step towards helping you both relax. Experiment to see what works - some people find that new positions can prevent urine leaks or pain.



#### People cope with their bladder issues during intimacy in different ways:

- Laughing about it
- Having sex in the shower or bathtub
- Padding the bed with sheets
- Avoiding sex
- Connecting intimately in other ways, like massages



#### It's important to have the right mindset

A positive self-image is the first step to be able to enjoy sex - to feel that you are desirable even though your body has changed or the way you can have sex is different. Another important factor is being open with your partner about how you feel. Talking about your worries and allowing your partner to share their thoughts as well, can help you relax when you're together.



#### Did you know?

In general, the sexual response is different for men and women:

Women's motivations for having sex are usually related to attraction, pleasure, affection, love, emotional closeness and reproduction. More commonly, sexual desire is triggered rather than spontaneous.

Men more often have sexual fantasies and thoughts about sex. Men also feel the urge to have sex more often than women. As you age, the difference in sexual response between women and men becomes less obvious.



## Planning can make intimacy more enjoyable



### **The confidence to enjoy an active sex life**

Intermittent self catheterisation (ISC) should rarely interfere with sexual activity if you make sure to catheterise and empty your bladder completely first. What you may need to consider is that ISC does not always allow you to be completely spontaneous. This is because you should always take the time to empty your bladder before getting intimate. Women are more likely to get urinary tract infections (UTIs) and sexual activity can increase the risk because

of the female anatomy. Even though the risk is higher for females, men can also get urinary tract infections.



Even though you may really want to be sexually active, your worries about bladder issues might hold you back. There are a few extra precautions you can take when you have bladder issues – both to avoid disturbing leaks of urine and to prevent urinary tract infections. We've included a few tips below.

## Some things to consider

*During intercourse your genital area will always be introduced to bacteria – either from yourself or from your partner. Follow these tips for before, during and after sex to limit the amount of bacteria:*

### **Before sex**

We would always recommend emptying your bladder first. Bacteria is more likely to settle in a full bladder. Make sure your genital area is clean - have a quick wash or take a quick shower.

### **During sex**

You may want to keep a water-soluble gel (lubricant) on hand to help decrease friction and stress on the tissue in the genital area, which could contribute to urinary tract infections (UTIs).

Consider the type of birth control you may want to use. The use of diaphragms and spermicides can sometimes cause irritation or even UTIs. If you find that you have frequent urinary tract infections as a result of sexual activity, speak to your Healthcare Professional about another form of birth control.

### **After sex**

It's a good idea to try and empty your bladder after having sex, as this will flush out potential bacteria.

## Frequently Asked Questions



### *Frequently Asked Questions for women*

#### ***It hurts when we have sex. What can I do?***

Some women with bladder problems experience pain during intercourse. If this happens to you, contact your Healthcare Professional for advice.

#### ***I feel very dry. What can I do?***

It's common to have difficulties with moisture in the tissue of your genitalia. Try a water-based lubricant. If you feel sore, talk to your Healthcare Professional.

#### ***How do I prevent urinary tract infections (UTIs)?***

There are some things you can do to try and minimise the risk of UTIs:

- Try to empty your bladder both before and after sexual activity
- Clean your genital area before and after sex
- Drink water afterwards to help flush out any bacteria

If these suggestions don't help, talk to your Healthcare Professional.

#### ***I am pregnant. Can ISC harm my baby?***

Catheterisation will not harm your baby at any stage of your pregnancy.

### *Frequently Asked Questions for men*

#### ***How can I stop leakage?***

If you catheterise just before sex, you shouldn't need to worry about leakage. If you still have concerns, try wearing a condom.

#### ***Why do I sometimes get an erection when I catheterise?***

Sometimes catheterisation stimulates an erection. When you stimulate a reflex erection, you may want to use that erection for intercourse. If you take the catheter out and let the erection subside, it may be more difficult to stimulate a second reflex erection. To maintain an erection, a suggestion is to try masturbating briefly, and then catheterising. Resume masturbation when your bladder is empty.

## More support

If you did not find all the information that you need in this factsheet, you can contact Coloplast Charter on **0800 783 1434** for advice and support. Alternatively, you can visit [www.coloplastcharter.co.uk](http://www.coloplastcharter.co.uk) or discuss your questions and concerns with your healthcare professional.