Problems to report to the doctor

- If your nephrostomy tube falls out, call your urologist or go to a hospital Emergency Department immediately to have the tube replaced. Apply a clean dressing over the site.

- Leakage may occur around the tube for 5 to 7 days after it is placed. If leakage continues the tube should be assessed for correct placement and to make sure it is not blocked.

- **Call your urologist immediately if any of the following problems occur:**
  - your urine becomes bright red - a small amount of bleeding is expected after the tube is changed.
  - your nephrostomy tube stops draining.
  - the tube cracks or breaks.
  - you have increased or sudden back pain.
  - your urine becomes foul smelling and cloudy.
  - you have a fever (temperature above 38°C or 100.4°F) or chills.
  - you develop redness, swelling, soreness or an open area in the skin around the tube site.

*If you are unable to contact your urologist, go to the nearest hospital emergency department.*

What is a nephrostomy tube?

A nephrostomy tube is a soft, flexible tube that is placed into the kidney through a small opening in your skin (see diagram). It is taped or stitched to your skin or is held in place using a special dressing called a tube securement device. The nephrostomy tube allows urine to drain directly from your kidney into a drainage bag instead of into your bladder. If your other kidney is functioning, you will also pass urine the normal way. The kidneys produce urine continuously.

Reasons why you may have a nephrostomy tube?

A nephrostomy tube may be placed for the following reasons:

- to relieve a blockage in the ureter - the tube that carries urine from the kidney to the bladder.
- to allow an opening or tear in the ureter to heal.
- as part of the treatment for a kidney stone.
- following some types of surgery performed on the kidney or ureter.

Nephrostomy tubes are usually temporary, but may be permanent in some cases.
Going home with a nephrostomy tube

Before you go home arrangements may be made for a Home Care nurse (RN) to change the dressing around your nephrostomy tube. Your family doctor can also make arrangements for Home Care if necessary. Sometimes a family member is taught how to change the dressing.

How to prevent infection

Because the nephrostomy tube is placed in the kidney it is important to take proper care of your tube and its site to reduce the risk of infection. Some things you can do to prevent infection are:

- Keep the drainage bag below the level of your kidney at all times.
- Do not take a tub bath. You may shower.
- Keep the skin around your nephrostomy tube dry.
- Do not lie on the tubing or allow the tubing to kink, twist, or hang below the drainage bag as this may prevent the urine from draining out of the tube and into the drainage bag.
- Always keep the drainage system closed. Do not disconnect any connections unless instructed to do so.

Supplies you will need

At home you may be responsible for buying any equipment or supplies needed to care for your nephrostomy tube. The following is a list of supplies you will need.

- Alcohol swabs
- Urinary drainage leg bag
- Unsterile gloves
- Extension tubing
- Night drainage bag(s) - optional
- Other (specify):

Saskatchewan Aids to Independent Living (SAIL)

You may be referred to the SAIL Ostomy Program by an Enterostomal Therapy (ET) nurse for benefits. SAIL reimburses half the cost of your nephrostomy supplies, such as securement devices, skin barrier wipes, drainage bags and extension tubing. Gauze dressings are not covered. You are required to pay the full cost of the supplies at the pharmacy of your choice and then send the receipts to SAIL for a 50% reimbursement. Contact the RQHR Enterostomal Therapy Services at 766-2271 for more information.
How to clean your night drainage bag

If you use a larger drainage bag at night do not remove your leg bag from the nephrostomy tubing. Connect the bottom drain spout of the leg bag to the tubing on the larger drainage bag. You will need to empty and clean the night drainage bag when you remove it in the morning.

1. Rinse the bag out with cool tap water until water runs clear.
2. Clean the bag with mild soap or detergent and warm water using a syringe or funnel. Leave the soap in for a few minutes before rinsing the bag thoroughly.
3. A solution of one part vinegar and one part water can be put in the bag for 30 minutes to reduce odour and increase acidity in the bag.
4. Hang the bag in a clean place, without the cap, until dry.
5. Store the bag in a clean towel or bag.
6. NEVER store a dirty bag.

Nephrostomy tube changes

Long-term nephrostomy tubes are usually changed every 2 to 3 months or sooner if they become plugged.

Contact your urologist if you have had your nephrostomy tube for 3 months, even if it is working well, unless advised otherwise by your doctor. If you have any questions or concerns about your nephrostomy tube, please ask your urologist or nurse.

Fluid intake

It is important to drink plenty of fluids. It helps to prevent your nephrostomy tube from becoming blocked and reduces the risk of infection. Drink 8 to 12 glasses (250 ml. or 8 ounces) of fluid every day. If you have a medical condition that prevents you from drinking this much, check with your doctor. Fluid intake includes:

- anything you drink – water, tea, coffee, juice, milk etc.
- foods that are liquid - soup
- foods that become liquid at room temperature- Jell-O™, ice cream, custard.

Activity

Avoid all strenuous activities such as shoveling snow, heavy lifting, and any movement that causes a pulling sensation or pain around the tube. Please ask your doctor if you have any questions about a particular activity.

Types of dressings

You will likely have one of the following dressings:

- **Dry Gauze Dressing** – these dressings need to be changed daily and any time they become wet.
- **Transparent Film Dressing** – a gauze or foam may be applied under the film. These dressings only need to be changed once a week and any time they become loose or if fluid, like urine, blood or pus, collects under the dressing.
- **Tube Securement Device** – Niko Drain Fix™, Hollister™, Stat-lock™ or Cook™ device are changed weekly.
Types of dressings, cont’d

If you have a nephrostomy tube that has a disc to hold it in place, the disc is kept next to your skin at all times. A transparent dressing is placed over the disc and only needs to be changed if the dressing becomes loose (about every 2 to 3 weeks).

Caring for your nephrostomy tube

- Secure the tubing by taping it to your skin. This will prevent the tube from being pulled out accidentally.
- Do not attach the drainage bag to any part of the bed at night to reduce the risk of accidentally pulling the tube out. Make sure the bag is below the level of your kidney so that it can drain by gravity.
- If you have a gauze dressing, keep it dry by covering the area with a double-layer piece of plastic wrap (i.e. Saran Wrap™) and tape all sides before showering. If possible, shower just before your planned dressing change.
- If you have a transparent film dressing you can shower without covering the dressing.

Emptying the drainage bag

Before you go home you will be taught how to empty your drainage bag. Empty the bag when it is 1/2 full or before it becomes uncomfortable and pulls on your nephrostomy tube. The tubing will be secured with the dressing and with extra tape to prevent pulling.

Changing the drainage bag

You should always have an extra drainage bag available, but you may NEVER need to change the bag. Because the nephrostomy tube goes directly into your kidney, it is best to keep the nephrostomy tube, extension tube, and drainage bag as a closed system in order to prevent infection. Your hospital or Home Care Nurse will show you how to change the bag if necessary.

1. Gather your equipment.
2. Wash your hands with soap and water. Dry well. Apply gloves
3. Clean the connection between the nephrostomy tube and the drainage bag with an alcohol swab. Disconnect the nephrostomy tube from the drainage tubing. Repeated use of alcohol can cause cracks in the nephrostomy tube connection or tubing. If this occurs, contact your Home Care Nurse or Urologist.
4. Do not touch the end of either tube while attaching the end of the nephrostomy tube to the new drainage tube. Make sure the two tubes fit together securely.
5. Check to make sure the drainage spout of the new bag is closed so that it will not leak.
6. Secure the bag and tubing to your body. It is important to keep the bag lower than the level of your kidney to prevent infection.
7. Remove your gloves and wash your hands again with soap and water.