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NEPHROSTOMY CATHETER CARE: PATIENT INFORMATION

A percutaneous nephrostomy is the placement of a small tube into the kidney through the skin of the back. The most common indication for a nephrostomy is to manage a blockage of the ureter that prevents urine from draining from the kidney to the bladder.

Depending on the type of catheter that is inserted, urine may drain externally into a bag, or alternatively the end of the catheter may be capped and urine may drain internally. In either case, it is important that you be alert to possible problems that may be encountered.

PROBLEMS THAT MAY BE ENCOUNTERED:

1. **IRRITATION OF THE SKIN AROUND THE CATHETER:** The skin and gauze pad kept around the catheter should be kept dry and clean. The dressing should be changed at least several times per week. Some redness and elevation of the skin at the catheter entry site is common and no cause for alarm. If this becomes uncomfortable, warm soaks applied to the area may be helpful.
2. **LEAKAGE AROUND THE CATHETER AT THE SKIN:** A minimal amount of leakage noted on the dressing is generally not significant; if leakage soaks the dressing, it may mean that the catheter must be irrigated, repositioned or replaced.
3. **FEVER:** If you develop a fever or 101 degrees, or greater, lasting more than twelve hours, and if there is no other apparent cause for the fever (cold, flu), the catheter may need to be irrigated or replaced.
4. **CHANGE IN URINE VOLUME:** If your catheter has an external drainage bag, and there is a sudden or gradual decrease in urine volume, the catheter, may be blocked, and need to be irrigated or replaced.