

Urine drainage bags made easy

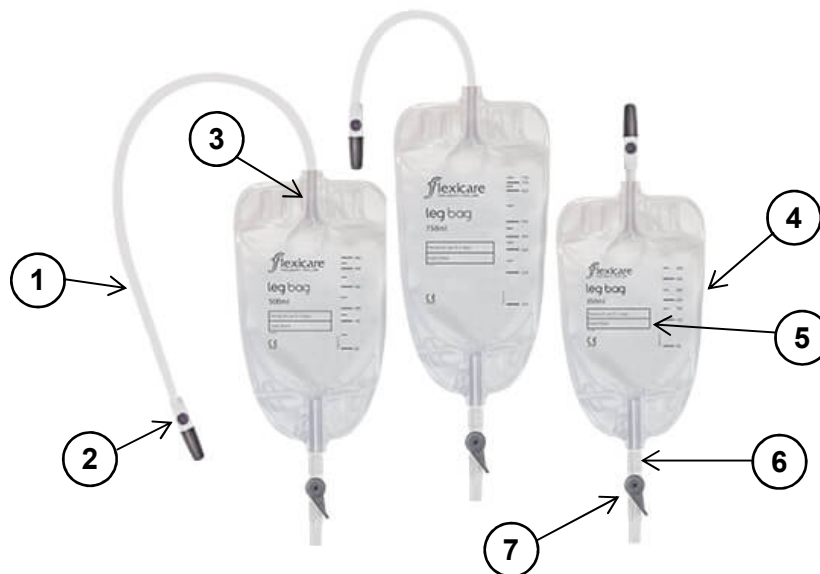
This guide is aimed at all prescribing and prescribing support staff working within a GP practice who would like to have a basic understanding of urine drainage bags.

What is a urine drainage bag?

Urine drainage bags collect urine from the body. A person may have a urine drainage bag because they have urinary incontinence, urinary retention, or have had surgery that has resulted in them needing an indwelling catheter.

- **Leg bags** are used during the day to collect urine and will stay in place for 5-7 days
- **Night bags** are designed to collect urine overnight and so have a larger fluid capacity than leg bags

The components of a leg bag



1. Inlet tube

Urine enters the leg bag through this tube which is connected to the end of an indwelling catheter or penile sheath.

2. Sample port

Urine samples can be taken from this area to test for a urinary tract infection.

3. Non-return valve

This is an infection-control feature that stops urine going back up the inlet tube into a catheter.

4. Bag

This fills as urine is collected.

5. Date fitted box

Writing the date of first use in this box highlights when the bag is due to be changed.

6. Outlet tube

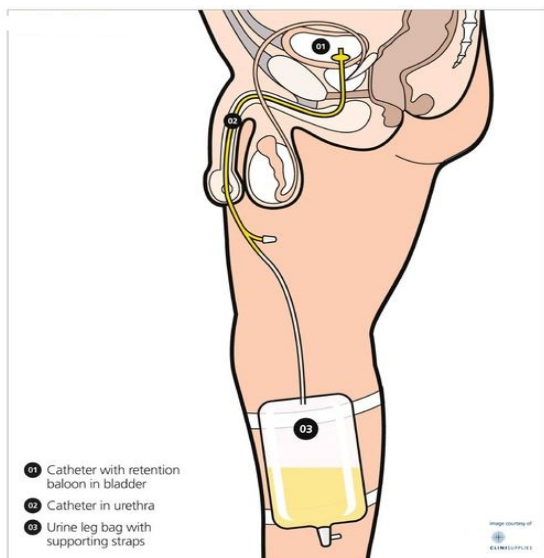
Urine exits the bag down this tube.

7. Outlet tap/valve

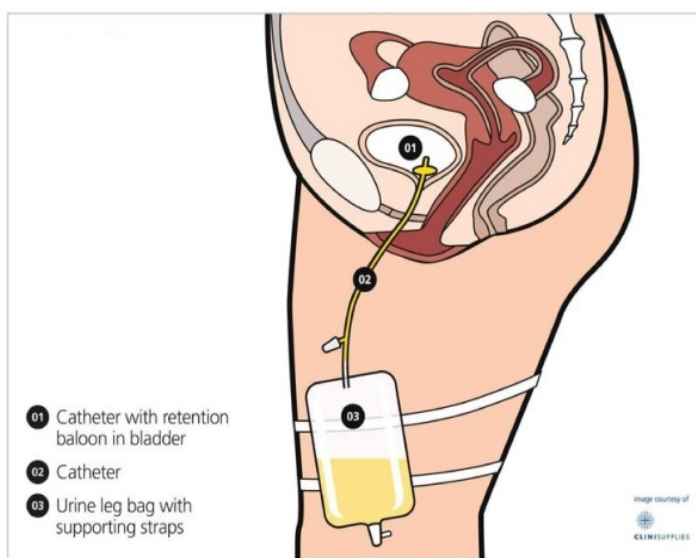
Once opened, this will allow urine to leave the bag.

Wearing a leg bag

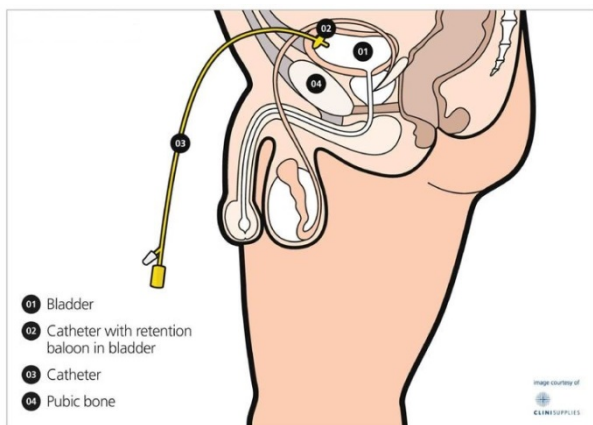
A leg bag may be connected to a urinary catheter via a catheter valve, or fitted directly to the catheter. It is secured to the leg using straps and/or sleeves/holders.



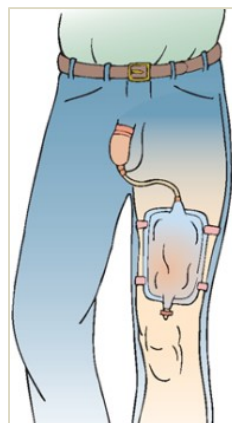
Male wearing a leg bag connected to a urethral indwelling catheter



Female wearing a leg bag connected to a urethral indwelling catheter



Male wearing a leg bag connected to a suprapubic indwelling catheter



Male wearing a leg bag connected to a penile sheath



Male wearing a leg bag sleeve/holder

Leg bag straps

Leg bag straps keep a leg bag in place and stop it pulling on the catheter tip inside the bladder or on the sheath system. All boxes of leg bags come with a pair of leg bag straps – one is larger because it sits higher up on the thigh and the other one is smaller because it sits lower down on the leg. You only need to prescribe the straps separately if you are replacing them due to damage. A patient will only need 2-3 packs of leg bag straps a year because they are washable.

Leg bag sleeves/holders

These are used to keep a leg bag in place instead of using straps if a patient has fragile skin or finds the straps uncomfortable to wear. Sleeves and holders are not supplied with leg bags so they will need to be prescribed separately. One pack of sleeves will last three months because they are washable, although they can snag over time if they are not looked after well.

Sizes of leg bags

Different people produce different quantities of urine and some people can go for longer periods of time before they need to empty their leg bag. Most people are prescribed a 500ml leg bag, although some are prescribed 750ml or even up to 1,300ml if they are in a wheelchair.

Chambered leg bags

These are leg bags that have three or more chambers for the urine to collect in rather than just one chamber. These are sometimes prescribed for patients if they need to distribute the weight of the bag more evenly around their leg for comfort.



Flocked backing

Some leg bags have a soft, cloth-like material on the back of the leg bag to keep the bag from sticking to the skin or chaffing. This is called a 'flocked backing'.

Inlet tubes

These are the tubes that urine passes through to enter the bag. The longer the inlet tube, the further down the leg a leg bag can be worn. Generally, a person would use a long tube leg bag if they like to wear trousers and a person would use a short tube leg bag if they like to wear skirts or shorts. Leg bags are manufactured with the following inlet tube lengths:

1. Direct inlet

There is no inlet tube – the urine enters straight into the bag.

2. Short tube

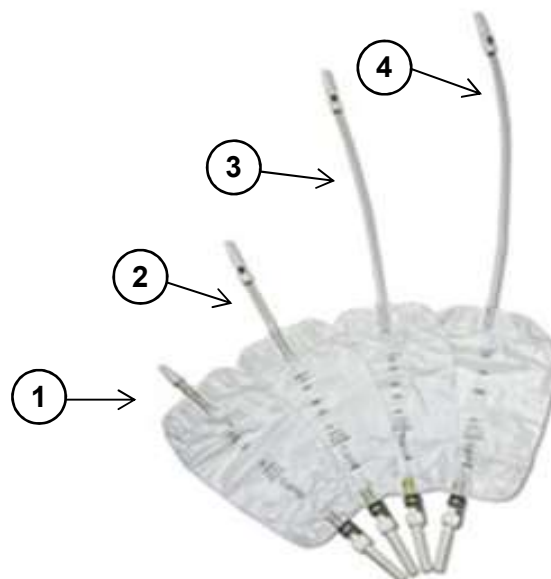
Short tube leg bags have an inlet tube of between 6cm and 10cm.

3. Long tube

Long tube leg bags have an inlet tube of between 25cm and 30cm.

4. Adjustable/variable tube

An adjustable/variable tube can be cut to the desired length. These are usually manufactured between 38cm and 60cm in length.



Outlet taps

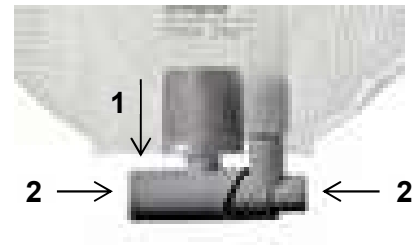
These are used to open the drainage bag to allow urine to empty from the bag. There are several types of outlet taps on a leg bag:



Lever tap (sometimes called a 'swing' tap). This can be opened or closed by pulling the lever up or down.



Twist tap. This can be opened/closed by twisting the tap round.

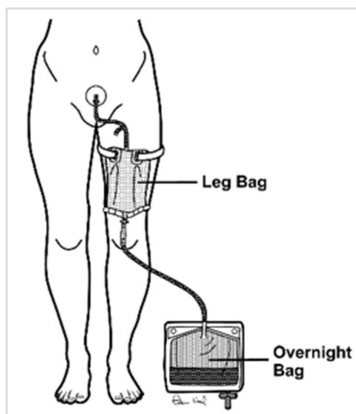


Two-step safety lock. This requires the patient to pull the valve down and squeeze the sides together to start the flow.

There is another type of tap called a '**T Tap**' (sometimes called a 'click-close' or 'slide action' tap) but these are not recommended for use due to infection control issues.

Night bags

These are the same principle as leg bags except that they are manufactured in larger sizes to accommodate a larger quantity of urine. This is to prevent patients having to get up several times in the night to empty the bag. A night bag is designed to connect to the outlet tap end of a leg bag, so at night time the outlet tap at the bottom of the leg bag is left open. Urine will then flow through the open leg bag and into the night bag where it will collect. For hygiene reasons a night bag should never be placed on the floor, so they are usually held up on a night bag stand or a night bag hanger. The night bag can be emptied the next morning and stored away ready for use the next night.



A night bag connected to a leg bag.



A night bag connected to a night bag hanger.



A night bag connected to a night bag stand.

Drainable night bags ('multi use')

If a night bag has an outlet tap that can be opened and closed again, it is called a *drainable* bag because the urine can be drained away and the bag can be used again the next night. Drainable bags can be used for 5-7 days before they need to be changed. They are only recommended for patients who are responsible for emptying and changing their own bags.



Non-drainable night bags ('single use')

Some night bags have an outlet tap that will 'snap' when you open it, meaning that the tap can't be closed again. As a result, these bags can only be used once and have to be replaced each night. Some non-drainable night bags don't even have taps and instead you have to cut the bag at the top to drain the urine away down a toilet. These bags are normally recommended for patients who need help emptying and changing their bags.



Anti-kink tubing

Some night bags have anti-kink tubing, meaning that the inlet tube of the night bag cannot be bent in the night if the patient accidentally lays on it. If an inlet tube did bend, it might result in urine backing up in the leg bag or the bladder because it can't flow down into the night bag.

Sterile and non-sterile bags

Some leg and night bags are manufactured sterile and some are non-sterile. Patients should always use a sterile leg bag if they are connecting it directly to the end of an indwelling ('Foley') catheter. Non-sterile leg bags can be used by patients who need to attach it to a penile sheath or urinal.

Wheelchair users

Wheelchair users are better suited to using larger volume leg bags which do not need to be emptied quite so often. They may also use leg bags have been especially manufactured bent so that they can be worn on the leg alongside the knee joint.



Abdominal bags

Some patients may use an abdominal or 'belly' bag around their waist instead of a leg bag. This may be the preferred option for people who participate in a lot of sports activities.



Kipper bags

Regular leg bags are made of plastic but some patients prefer to use a leg bag made of rubber or latex. These are kipper bags. They are rather old-fashioned now though so are rarely used.

Switching urine drainage bags

A series of switch messages have been set up to on OptimiseRx/ScriptSwitch, which recommend switching specific urine drainage bags over to other brands. These have been developed with our local Bowel and Bladder team specialist nurses and promote the use of formulary products, or non-formulary products where more appropriate if they are better value for money. Urine drainage bags are very interchangeable because one brand is much the same as another. The only consideration to bear in mind is to ensure that the inlet tube is around the same length on the leg bag you are switching to; otherwise it may not reach the end of the catheter valve or be placed on the desired area of the leg. Our optimise Rx/ScriptSwitch switch messages have already taken this into account.

Glossary of terms

Indwelling urethral catheter ('Foley')	A catheter that is inserted into the urethra and is held in place in the bladder by an inflated balloon. Indwelling catheters are changed every four to 12 weeks, depending on the material they are made of.
Indwelling suprapubic catheter	A catheter that is inserted through a hole in the abdomen to reach the bladder. These might be prescribed if the urethral route is not viable, for example, previous urethral trauma. These can remain in situ for one to three months, depending on the brand.
Penile sheath	A penile sheath fits over the penis like a condom and is attached to a urine drainage bag or catheter valve. It can be worn for up to 24 hours at a time before it is removed and replaced.
Urinal	A urinal is a bottle (usually made of plastic) that is used to collect urine. These are useful for patients with limited mobility and those who need to measure their volume of urine output.