

Maintaining Continence at Camp and Sleepovers

There is no vacation from neurogenic bowel and bladder...
but it doesn't have to ruin your vacation

Bowel and bladder management is one of the most important health practices, but also one of the most distressing issues for young people with Spina Bifida. Incontinence is a difficult problem to solve. Success requires strict adherence to routine catheterization and bowel care. Staying clean and dry is vital to skin health, well-being, social acceptance and independence. For this reason, many children need support, assistance and encouragement at home and school. What happens when you are away from home overnight? This document outlines how to plan and take care of yourself at camp or at sleepovers.

To understand the importance of a good bladder routine, you need to understand how the kidneys and bladder work. Kidneys are important organs. They filter (remove) waste products from the blood and make urine which goes through the ureters and then to the bladder where it is stored until urination or catheterization. Urine must be removed from the bladder several times each day in order to prevent urinary tract infections and maintain healthy kidneys. Bowels must be cleaned out daily or at least several times each week.

Bladder management affects bowel continence. Both affect how you feel and your overall health. Sitting in soiled clothing may lead to urinary tract infections and skin breakdown.

Avoid Constipation or leakage

Bowel accidents do happen, but may be avoided with good habits:

- Eat a healthy diet loaded with grains and a variety of fruit and vegetables.
- Drink plenty of fluids (mainly water), and avoid caffeine, alcohol and carbonated beverages because they irritate the bladder.
- Do normal bowel care (medications, washouts, suppositories or enemas) before leaving for camp or sleepover, and continue to do it as scheduled even if you are not at home.
- Anal plugs approved by your healthcare provider may be temporarily helpful overnight or during swimming.



Supply Kit

Before you leave home, pack your bag! You will need many things including:

- Packaged disposable catheters (bring extra just in case)
- Lubrication unless catheters are pre-lubricated
- Wet wipes
- Hand held mirror (girls may need this to see where to insert the catheter)
- Pads or disposable briefs if needed
- Hand soap
- Plastic bags for soiled items or disposal of used equipment
- Clean clothes, especially extra underwear

Take extra supplies and keep them where you can get them when needed. Plan your day to include bathroom time.

Tips about the space you need for bowel and bladder care

- Be sure you have a space that allows for privacy and personal safety (door that can easily be locked and unlocked, appropriate lighting).
- Be sure to acquire a bathroom large enough for you to move as needed, fully accessible with wide doorways and with safety rails firmly on the wall if standing or transferring is necessary
- The sink must be accessible.
- Wash your hands before and after bladder and bowel routine.
- Perform bladder care first, then bowel care.
- While undressed, do careful skin inspection for redness or irritation.
- Check your appearance for cleanliness and neatness.
- Tidy the bathroom before leaving.

Other considerations

- Practice at home so you can be prepared to be away from home.
- You may need a reminder such as an alarm on your watch or someone to remind you to catheterize, or take medications or to do your bowel routine.
- If you need assistance, be sure to let a friend or adult know how they can help before you arrive at your destination.
- If you have a trusted person that you can tell about your neurogenic bowel and bladder, ask that person to alert you if they notice unpleasant smells or leakage.
- Do not allow a stranger or person you do not trust to assist you with personal care.
- Report any person who makes you feel unsafe or uncomfortable.
- Keep copies of your prescriptions, important medical records or medical alert information with you when away from home.
- If you have a shunt, bring copies of your most recent scans on disc, and also information about your shunt in case there is a medical emergency.
- Be aware of the nearest regional neurosurgical center and ensure there is a responsible adult present to provide emergency care or transportation to hospital.

Other Resources

Carry When to call the doctor: signs and symptoms of urinary tract infection pocket card

[Carry When to call the doctor: signs and symptoms of shunt malfunction pocket card](#)

[Pediatric Urinary Tract Infection Sheet](#)

[Learn about Urinary Tract Infections in Children with Neurogenic Bladder & Bowel](#)

[SB University: Save our Skin \(S.O.S.\) – under general health and preventative medicine](#)



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