Urine Control for Men:
The Right Product for the Best Health

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It is important to know all your options when making a decision concerning your health. There are several products available for controlling men’s incontinence. When was the last time you talked to your doctor or nurse practitioner about the product you’re using? Knowing the pros and cons of each product available, along with advice from your doctor or nurse practitioner, will provide you with the knowledge necessary to choose the right urine management product for you and your health. If this is your problem, read on! You will have a brief overview at your fingertips.

Incontinence Pads - There are two general types available, adult briefs and over the bed pads. Both types are made from a material that absorbs urine as it is released.

The good: Easily available at the local drugstore and very simple to use.

The bad: This is a new category for incontinence products. According to Excess Risk of Bladder Cancer in Spinal Cord Injury: Evidence for an Association Between Indwelling Catheters and Bladder Cancer states, intermittently catheterizing is a way for men to empty their bladder with less chance of infection than indwelling catheters. The device requires accurate placement of the penis, and your health.

The ugly: This method requires a lot more know how, and it must be done frequently enough to keep the bladder empty. Adequate hand function is required or a caregiver must be available. Some men who cannot pass urine and intermittently catheterize can also leak urine. A condom catheter is often used to catch leaking urine. However, condom catheters must be removed before each intermittent catheterization (four or five times daily), creating a higher risk of skin tears and wounds on the penis.

Intermittent Catheterization - There are three types of intermittent catheterizations involving insertion of a catheter through the urinary opening (meatus) into the urethra which attaches to the bladder to drain the accumulated urine. Clean Intermittent Catheterization (CIC) is the most common type done in a home environment. A catheter may be reused after being cleaned, with boiling water or rinsing with a catheter cleaning solution.

The good: Using an indwelling catheter allows the skin to stay dry. There is also a low initial cost associated with indwelling catheters because one catheter may be used for six to eight weeks. Indwelling catheters require less frequent changes and provide a way for men, who cannot pass urine, to remove urine from their bladder.

The bad: Long-term use of indwelling catheters can lead to a 100% chance of urinary tract infection, says Edward Kass in his article Asymptomatic Infections of the Urinary Tract, 25% chance of kidney infection, 6% risk of a blood stream infection (sepsis), 25% chance of kidney (renal) stones, and 41% chance of bladder stones, according to an article by E. Newman and M. Price titled Bacteriuria in Patients with Spinal Cord Lesions: Its Relationship to Urinary Drainage Appliances.

The ugly: According to Another Risk of Bladder Cancer in Spinal Cord Injury: Evidence for an Association Between Indwelling Catheters and Bladder Cancer states, intermittently catheterizing is a way for men to empty their bladder with less chance of urinary tract infections and other health risks associated with indwelling catheters.

The bad: Some men who cannot pass urine and intermittently catheterize can also leak urine. A condom catheter is often used to catch leaking urine. However, condom catheters must be removed before each intermittent catheterization (four or five times daily), creating a higher risk of skin tears and wounds on the penis. This may require a surgical repair.

Condom Catheter - Also known as a Texas catheter, this is a thin flexible sheath with adhesive inside that is worn over the shaft of the penis with a tube at the end to attach to a leg or bedside urine collection bag.

The good: If you use one a day, condom catheters are inexpensive, reimbursed by most insurances and readily available.

The bad: Condom catheters come in different sizes, making it hard to find the right fit as the penis changes size and shape during the day. The condom catheter may be too tight causing constriction and wounds or too loose causing leaks and“pop-offs.” Condom catheters may injure uncircumcised men if the adhesive traps the foreskin.

The ugly: Condom catheters do not stay on men with small or retracted (penis pulls back inside the body) anatomy. Using condom catheters may make the penis vulnerable to skin irritations, rashes and wounds, warns Coping with Incontinence - Condom Catheter. Users also have a 63% chance of getting urinary tract infections, states the SouthMed Journal.

A New Category of External Catheters - A relatively new type of external catheter seals only to the tip of the penis with a two-piece seal, directing urine away from the body. The device attaches to a leg or bedside urine collection bag.

The good: The device is designed for extended wear time and is the only Medicare reimbursable product that works reliably for small, retracted and uncircumcised anatomy. Since this device seals to the tip of the penis, there is no risk of irritation or wounds to the shaft of the penis and the risk of urinary tract infections caused by indwelling catheters is eliminated. Men who intermittently catheterize and use an external product to catch leaking urine can insert their catheter without removing the device...saving skin and cost.

The bad: For the best wear times, the device requires accurate placement of the two-piece seal. Adequate hand function or help from a personal care assistant may be needed.

The ugly: This is a new category for incontinence management products. At this time, there is only one product in this category - the Liberty Pouch Clean and Dry Male External Catheter. The Liberty Pouch Clean and Dry Male External Catheter makes use of a unique collection chamber (Liberty Pouch) which was developed by BioErm, Inc. This is so new that most health care professionals will not have heard of the new Liberty Pouch. Details on product usage and insurance coverage can be found at www.libertypouch.us.

The volume of information available for managing men’s urine control can make you feel overwhelmed. It doesn’t have to be. By reading research on your own and having in-depth conversations with your doctor, nurse practitioner or continuum specialist, you will have the knowledge and power to choose the right product for you and your health.