

# Going home with your Tunneled Catheter

---

Your Tunneled Catheter was put in by \_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_  
Doctor date

Your Tunneled Catheter was put in at:

- McMaster University Medical Centre
- Hamilton General Hospital
- Juravinski Hospital and Cancer Centre
- St. Joseph's Healthcare
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

If you have any problems with your Tunneled Catheter, call your community or primary nurse.

Brand name of Tunneled Catheter \_\_\_\_\_

Non-valved (open ended)  or Valved

Size or gauge of the Tunneled Catheter \_\_\_\_\_

Length of external catheter (exit site to hub) \_\_\_\_\_ cm.

Number of lumens  Single  Double  Triple

Stitches to be removed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

The above information was completed by \_\_\_\_\_  
Nurse/Technologist

on \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_  
area phone

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

---

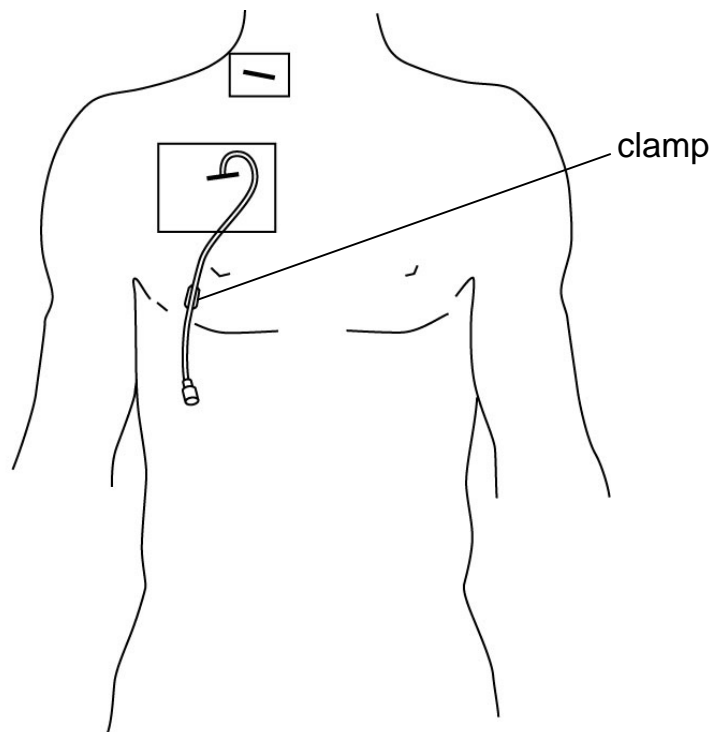
You are going home with a tunneled catheter. The catheter is a long thin tube and may stay in your chest for several months or years. Your tunneled catheter may be used:

- to give fluids
- to give medications
- for nutrition
- to give blood products
- to take blood samples

Keep all dressings clean and dry. Your tunneled catheter will need routine care, such as dressing changes and flushing. Your nurse will discuss this with you.

## When you first get your tunneled catheter

When you first get your tunneled catheter, it is normal for the area around your tunneled catheter to be sore. You may have stitches on your chest and neck. The soreness may last a few days. It may bleed or ooze a little. Your nurse will check and change the dressing. Please let the nurse know your concerns.



When the stitches have been removed, your catheter will be healed enough to hold itself in place under the skin. From then on, the dressing covering the catheter needs to be changed weekly.

---

## When you have a tunneled catheter, do not:



- × use scissors near the tunneled catheter
- × swim with the tunneled catheter
- × pull or tug on the catheter
- × use pins near the catheter
- × get the dressings wet – if the dressing gets wet it will need to be changed

## Safety

Your nurse will discuss safety measures with your tunneled catheter.

Your tunneled catheter should always be covered. When you return to your normal routine such as household chores, cooking, work, sexual activity, you can move as you feel comfortable. **Do not overuse your arm or shoulder on the side with the tunneled catheter.**

Make sure that the dressing stays on and does not get wet. Secure the catheter so that your clothes do not pull on it.

Your tunneled catheter needs special care to keep it clean and working well. This care may be done by you, a family member, a friend or a nurse. Your nurses will help you learn about the care of your tunneled catheter.

When you get home watch for these problems:

Problem	What to do
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The dressing is soaked with blood.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do not remove the dressing. Apply pressure with another dressing or clean towel.</li> <li>Call your nurse.</li> <li><b>If you bleed a lot or the bleeding does not stop – go to the Emergency Department.</b></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The dressing is soaked with clear fluid.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cover with a <b>clean</b> dressing or clean towel.</li> <li>Call your nurse.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The area around your tunneled catheter gets more puffy and swollen.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Call your nurse.</li> <li>Go to the Emergency Department.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The tunneled catheter breaks.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pinch and fold over the catheter above the break.</li> <li>Use your safety clamp to clamp above the broken area, closest to your body.</li> <li>Cover the broken end of the catheter with gauze or clean towel and tape.</li> <li>Go to the Emergency Department.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The cap falls off the end of the catheter.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Make sure catheter is clamped.</li> <li>Clean end of catheter and apply new end cap, or cover the open end of the catheter with gauze and tape.</li> <li>Call your nurse.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Swelling of neck, arm or face on the side that the catheter is located.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Go to the Emergency Department.</li> </ul>

- ✓ **If you have trouble breathing, irregular or strange heart beat call 911 or go to the Emergency Department.**
- ✓ **If you are unsure of what to do or have concerns about your tunneled catheter, call your nurse.**

## Supplies

There are 2 options for tunneled catheter care and supplies provided by CCAC (Community Care Access Centre):

- CCAC will make an appointment for you to attend a Nursing Care Centre for tunneled catheter care
- CCAC will have supplies delivered to your home and home care will be provided. Keep your supply box in a clean, dry and safe place. Keep it away from children and pets.

### Supplies needed if you have home care:

- liquid soap, in a pump or bottle or waterless soap
- paper towels
- garbage bag
- clean towel
- sharps container (if using needles)

## When you have a tunneled catheter, it is a good idea to:

- have your emergency telephone numbers close by
- have your visiting nurse or hospital telephone number close by
- keep a list of your questions, problems, notes in a book or diary
- keep a calendar for clinic appointments

## When doing your tunneled catheter care:

- set aside 20 to 45 minutes
  - limit distractions, such as not answering your phone
  - clean your work area before and after tunneled catheter care
-

## Setting up your home

You will need a work area or space to lay out the supplies. When choosing the best place to do your tunneled catheter care, keep these things in mind:

- good lighting
- a room that is easy to keep clean and free of dust
- a comfortable spot in the room to sit or lie down
- a safe area away from children and pets
- a place free of drafts away from open windows, heating ducts and fans
- clean surface for supplies

Your nurse will help you to learn as much as you can about your tunneled catheter so that you will be able to become as independent as possible.

If you want to learn more about changing your dressing or other parts of your care, please ask your nurse.

Call your nurse if you have problems with your tunneled catheter or supplies:

Your nurse's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

---



