

enCATHopedia Volume 3

URETHRAL STRICTURES

What is a urethral stricture?

A urethral stricture means a constriction (narrowing) of the urethra. It often causes difficulties emptying the bladder, and mostly affects men.

Strictures are commonly a result of inflammation in the urethra wall that leads to scarring, which in turn causes the urethra to narrow. The inflammation can be due to a sexually transmitted disease, injury or come as a result after an operation of the urethra. Scarring can also be the result of catheterization with indwelling catheters as well as some types of intermittent catheterization. Symptoms include a weak stream, spraying, pain, and difficulty starting to urinate.

How strictures affect the bladder

The stricture impedes urine flow, making it difficult to empty the bladder. It can also be hard to start urinating, and sometimes it feels like the bladder has not been properly emptied. Some people also experience urine leakage.

Urethral strictures can be treated surgically, where the stricture is cut and then healed again. After surgery, patients use a catheter regularly to widen the urethra, prevent new scarring and avoid new strictures. This is an easy and gentle procedure called clean intermittent dilatation (CID).

CID can help

For people with enough dexterity to handle a catheter, CID is a safe and effective way to help alleviate the problems that may arise from a stricture, and to prevent new ones from occurring. It helps maintain better control of their urinary system health by making it easier to empty the bladder.

Being able to empty the bladder completely helps avoid kidney damage, and complications from residual urine and urinary tract infections.

Easy, safe, convenient

Many people perform CID because it offers many advantages:

- It's easy and safe, and while it may feel a little weird at first, it does not hurt.
- It improves urinary system health.
- The treatment is simple and convenient, and can be performed at home.
- It is easy to get used to and becomes natural in no time.
- It prevents new strictures from developing and thereby avoiding the need for further surgery.

What to do if you think you have a stricture

Always talk to your doctor or nurse about any problems you have with your urinary system.

Urethral strictures are a familiar issue, one that has been recognized for thousands of years. The sooner a stricture is diagnosed and treated, the sooner normal urinary function and health can return.

enCATHopedia is an information series addressing a range of subjects within urology. It is part of our commitment to improve quality of life for users and healthcare professionals worldwide.

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