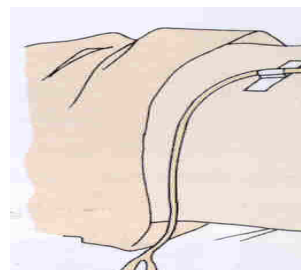


Stabilizing the Urinary Catheter

The indwelling urinary catheter is secured or stabilized to prevent accidental removal, reduce trauma to the urethra and bladder, and reduce inflammation of urinary tissues. The goal of stabilization is to prevent excessive pull or traction on the catheter. There are a variety of methods used to stabilize a catheter. This article will describe several stabilization methods.

Taping the catheter is a frequent method used for stabilization. The drainage tube attached to the catheter is taped to the person's thigh or abdomen. The area of the thigh is the best site for taping with women. Men to secure the catheter use the site of the thigh or lower abdomen. The lower abdomen site is preferred for long-term use of catheters for men as it reduces the tissue damage to the urethra. One method of taping is to apply about three inches of tape flat to the skin, and then a second piece of three-inch tape is applied around the drainage tubing with a pinch securing the second piece of tape upon itself. The sticky wings of the second tape then are applied directly over the first piece of tape. The idea is the second tape can be removed without removing the first tape, thus keep from irritating the skin. The taping method is not expensive and tape is available in drug stores. Adhesive cloth tape is available as well as hypo allergy tape. The taping method can cause irritation of the skin and/or a rash to the skin with allergy reactions. Tape can loosen quickly and stabilization of the catheter is then not effective.

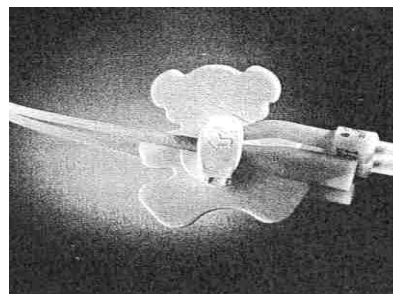
**Illustration demonstrating the use of tape to stabilize
The catheter to the thigh or lower abdomen**



Catheter Straps also are commonly used for catheter stabilization. Catheter straps consist of an elastic band with a Velcro strip. The elastic band is placed around the person's thigh and the Velcro strip secures the catheter for stabilization. The benefits of the catheter strap are that it is easy to use and causes less skin irritation or rashes. The disadvantages of the catheter strap are that it can loosen and slip or cause constriction of vessels if applied too tight.

Adhesive Anchors does not use straps. The anchor is a locking device, which can be re-used to stabilize the catheter. The anchor has an adhesive backing, which is applied directly to the skin and can be left in place for a week. The Adhesive Anchor can be applied to the areas of the thigh or lower abdomen. Adhesive Anchors are available with hypoallergenic tape. The benefits of the adhesive anchors are that they are easy to use, secure the catheter well, and are comfortable to the person. The condition of the skin with taping or adhesive anchors is the same (Hanchett, 2002). A wipe with a skin protection product can be used under the adhesive taping to prevent skin irritation.

Illustration of an adhesive anchor



Cost Comparison

Tape	Catheter strap	Adhesive anchor
Hypoallergy tape 1" x 10 yards \$2.99	Catheter strap \$4.93 each (reusable)	Adhesive anchor, hypoallergenic \$2.25 each (not re-usable)
Cloth tape 1" x 10 yards \$2.99		

The person may select any of the three products to purchase the item best for their personal preferences. All products will secure the catheter from tugging or pulling.

References

Hanchett, M. (2002). Techniques for stabilizing urinary catheters. *American Journal of Nursing*, 102, 44-48.

Perry, A.G., & Perry, P.A. (2002). *Clinical nursing skills & techniques (5th ed.)* St. Louis, MO: Mosby.