



Having a Biliary Drainage Catheter Inserted

This handout offers information on having a biliary drainage catheter inserted. Read this handout before your appointment to have the biliary drainage catheter inserted.

What is a biliary drainage catheter?

A biliary drainage catheter is a thin, flexible tube that drains bile from your liver. Your doctor may recommend you have a biliary drainage catheter inserted if your bile duct is blocked.

How a biliary drainage catheter can help you

Bile is a fluid made by your liver. It helps you digest (break down) food. Bile flows from your liver through your bile ducts and into your small intestine.

Your bile duct can be narrowed or blocked by scar tissue or a tumor. When this happens, bile can no longer flow into the first part of your small intestine, called the duodenum. When your bile duct is narrowed or blocked, it causes bile to build up in your liver.

The buildup of bile in your liver can cause:

- An infection
- Nausea (feeling like you are going to throw up)
- Vomiting (throwing up)
- A fever
- Itching
- Jaundice (when your skin and the whites of your eyes look yellow)

Preparing to have your drainage catheter inserted

1. You need to have bloodwork done before your drainage catheter is inserted.
2. If you take a blood thinning medication (this includes Aspirin®)

Your doctor and nurse will tell you when to stop your blood thinning medication before your drainage catheter is inserted. You will also be told when to restart it after your drainage catheter is inserted.

The name of your blood thinning medication _____

Stop your blood thinning medication _____ days before your drainage catheter is inserted.

Restart your blood thinning medication _____ days after your drainage catheter is inserted.

3. Do not drink alcohol for 24 hours before your drainage catheter is inserted.

On the day your drainage catheter drainage is inserted

- 6 hours before your appointment to have the drainage catheter inserted
Do not eat any food. Do not chew gum or have any candy. You can drink unflavoured water. Take your regularly scheduled medications with unflavored water.
- An adult must drive you to and from the hospital and stay with you for 24 hours after you go home.
- Bring your health card and a list of the medications you are taking to this appointment.

Having your drainage catheter inserted

Check in at the reception desk of the Diagnostic Imaging department. The Diagnostic Imaging department is located in the N-wing on the main floor of the hospital. You will change into a hospital gown and lie down on a stretcher. A nurse inserts an intravenous (IV) line into one of your veins. The interventional radiologist explains how the drainage catheter is inserted and answers any questions you have. You need to sign a consent to have the drainage catheter inserted. You will receive medications through your IV to help you relax and to keep you comfortable. These drugs will make you feel sleepy.

You will be brought into a procedure room and moved onto an X-ray table. A nurse takes your blood pressure, heart rate, and checks your oxygen levels. This is done many times while your drainage catheter is being inserted. An oxygen mask may be placed on your face. It takes about 1 hour for the drainage catheter to be inserted.

The skin on your abdomen is cleaned with an antiseptic to keep you from getting an infection. It feels cold and wet and may colour your skin pink. The interventional radiologist inserts a needle into your abdomen. You will feel the needle stick and then some mild burning. This needle has medication in it to freeze the area so you do not feel pain when the drainage catheter is inserted.

The interventional radiologist makes a small cut in your skin. Using ultrasound, a drainage catheter is inserted through your skin and into your bile duct. You may feel a little pushing on your abdomen. This may cause you some discomfort. An x-ray is used to make sure the drainage catheter is inserted in the right place.

The built up fluid from your bile duct is drained out at this time. After the fluid is drained out, your drainage catheter is connected to a drainage bag. The drainage bag is attached to your leg to keep it in place.

You will stay in the hospital for about 3 to 4 hours after your drainage catheter is inserted. A nurse cares for you during this time.

You need an adult to drive you home and stay with you for 24 hours because of

the medications you were given. You can drink and eat your normal diet.

You will receive the Interventional Radiology Discharge Instructions – Drain/Line Insertion with Sedation handout with information you need to know after your drainage catheter is inserted.

Talk to a member of your health care team if you have questions or do not understand any information in this handout.

Last reviewed: March 2025