

Alice's story of living with a catheter

Alice was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in 2012, and one of her major symptoms was urinary retention – she had a catheter inserted that year, and has been living with one since then.

Alice says, “most of the time, it works very well. It’s a normal thing. It’s only when it falls out, or gets blocked, you realise it is not normal and you need someone to help. I go into urine retention very quickly. But, all in all, it is satisfactory. I don’t regularly go to the doctor’s.”

Living with a catheter is something that’s now normal for Alice, but she says that there are challenges involved, as “it can flood, no matter how many pads you use.” She also found that the size and type of catheter she used can impact on how effective it is – she was initially fitted with a clear catheter, but later had this changed to an opaque catheter, which became blocked more easily.

Alice says: “It’s impossible to create a catheter that never blocks, but every time I go through A & E, everybody I have seen has been incredibly kind to me and treated me with a lot of respect. I think that goes a long way because you are in a very vulnerable position.”

Alice now uses a suprapubic catheter (a small tube inserted into the bladder through a hole in the stomach). When it’s changed Alice takes a course of antibiotics, but she doesn’t use them every day because she could develop medication resistance, as she’s been having a lot of catheter-associated UTIs.