

Bladder Training



Patient Information

Bladder Training

The aim of bladder training is to reduce the number of times you empty your bladder. It encourages your bladder to behave normally so that when it is quite full, it produces a mild sensation of needing to be empty, which can be postponed until it is convenient to do so.

Bladder Training may be recommended if you have symptoms of frequency (passing urine more than eight times per day) or urgency (a sudden, strong need to empty your bladder). For some people, not getting to the toilet quickly enough may result in leakage (urge incontinence).

Bladder Diary

You may have been asked to complete a chart for three days. This gives us valuable information about your fluid intake, how often you empty your bladder and your bladder capacity.

Advice on fluids plays an important part in reducing continence symptoms. Try to write down what you drink, how much you drink and when you drink it on the bladder diary before your next appointment.

It is equally important to measure your urine in a jug every time you empty your bladder and record on the chart along with any episodes of leakage.

Fluid Intake

In general terms, aim to drink 1 ½- 2 litres (3pints) of water or decaffeinated fluids each day, usually between 6am to 6pm. Some people do not drink enough fluid and believe this will reduce the number of times they have to empty their bladder or will reduce leakage. The reverse is true as concentrated urine may irritate the bladder causing it to leak or empty more often.

There is no evidence to support the belief that constant drinking will improve bladder function. A high fluid intake can make urinary symptoms worse by increasing urgency and frequency.

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If you are advised to change the amount you drink, try to do it gradually by decreasing or increasing one drink at a time until your body adjusts. Alternatively use a cup rather than a mug or vice versa.

If waking at night is troubling you, it is sensible to stop drinking for three hours before going to bed and avoid having drinks during the night. Try to swallow your tablets with a small glass of milk or water before going to bed.

Alcohol is a stimulant which increases symptoms of frequency and urgency. It also increases the amount of urine produced, so may need to be restricted.

Tea, coffee, hot chocolate and cola drinks contain caffeine which can irritate your bladder and increase visits to the toilet. Try alternatives such as milk, squash, herbal teas and decaffeinated tea or coffee. Aim to reduce your caffeinated drinks gradually or you may get withdrawal symptoms such as headaches. Artificial sweeteners can also irritate the bladder.

Cranberry juice or tablets may reduce the risk of urinary infections. Cranberry tablets are an inexpensive and sugar-free option to juice. If you are taking Warfarin, please do not take cranberry juice or tablets.

Bladder Training Strategies

Holding on

When you get the urge to go to the toilet, try to delay it. Sit down and distract yourself by counting, reciting the alphabet, finishing a job or reading a page of a book and try to do some gentle pelvic floor exercises. The aim is to regain control of your bladder by allowing the impulses to subside, rather than responding and rushing to the toilet. This technique will help you to regain control of your bladder and reduce the feelings of urgency that make you want to go to the toilet. Practise this at home where the toilet is easily accessible rather than when there is any uncertainty in locating a toilet.

By the Clock

Reduce the frequency of toilet visits by waiting for an extra few minutes each time you would normally go to the toilet, gradually increasing the time between visits. The focus on the clock rather than on the impulses from your bladder can help to increase your bladder capacity and reduce the amount of visits to the toilet.

Double Voiding

After passing urine in the toilet, try to empty your bladder fully by passing urine a second time. You may find these techniques helpful:

- If sitting, bend forwards and then sit back in an upright position
- Stand up and sit back on the toilet
- Pat your tummy gently
- Take your time to empty your bladder fully

Practise every time you go to the toilet. You will find that correct bladder emptying reduces leakage and the number of visits to the toilet. It will also prevent urinary tract infections.

Prompted Toileting

This can be helpful when reminders to use the toilet are required to maintain or regain a toileting routine. Prompting can be either one or two-hourly but a visit to the toilet should only occur when there is a positive response from the patient.

Timed Voiding

The bladder diary is used to establish a timed regime to anticipate the patient's need to visit the toilet. To be successful, help should be offered 30 minutes before the bladder is full.

Habits

Key In The Door Syndrome

Symptoms of urgency can occur on arriving home when the bladder has learnt that this is a cue to being 'emptied' and can become 'overly keen'. Try to prevent this by changing your routine on arriving home, perhaps by going home by a different route or entering by the back door.

These strategies may help to control urgency – try to practise them at home where a toilet is accessible:

- Sit down until the urge has subsided
- Try not to walk as this is when leakage occurs
- Practise distraction techniques

Just In Case

Try to break this habit by not visiting the toilet before leaving home or going on a journey as you are disrupting the bladder's ability to hold urine.

Using the Toilet at Night

As you get older it is acceptable to get up at night.

It can become a habit if you are woken up for example by a young baby, or if you have pain rather than by the urge to pass urine. Try to avoid a drink before going to bed and return to bed without visiting the toilet.

Studies show that certain lifestyle choices may cause your continence symptoms. Smoking, carrying too much weight (a body mass index of over 25) and tea drinking are all linked to incontinence.

Progress

The advice in this leaflet can have an immediate benefit for some people. For others, bladder training is harder to do and may take time.

Be patient and if you are asked to complete a bladder diary, bring it to clinic or email it to whc.continencepatient@nhs.net for your progress to be monitored and advice offered. The aim should be to put you back in control of your bladder so that you can leave home without seeking out a toilet.

Contact Us:

Continence Service Trowbridge Hospital Adcroft Street Trowbridge Wiltshire BA14 8PH 01225 711323	Continence Service Central Health Clinic Avon Approach, Castle Street Salisbury Wiltshire SP1 3SL 01722 323196
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Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

If you have any questions, or concerns, suggestions or compliments about our service, please speak to a member of staff.

This information sheet is available in other languages and formats. If you would like a copy, please contact us on 0300 123 7797 and whc.pals@nhs.net

Patient and Public Involvement

We value your opinions which will help us to further develop our services.

If you wish to provide feedback or get involved in our patient participation groups, please email the Patient and Public Involvement Officer at ask.wiltshirehealthandcare@nhs.net or telephone 01249 454386.