

Information for Patients

Bladder Retraining

What is Bladder Retraining?

Bladder retraining can be helpful if you have:

- Urinary frequency – passing urine more than 8 times during the daytime.
- Urinary urgency – a feeling that you must get to the toilet immediately.
- Urge incontinence – leakage of urine associated with urinary urgency.
- Recently had a catheter removed.

The aim of bladder retraining is to teach the bladder to hold more urine and empty less frequently, this means you will go to the toilet less often and pass more urine each time. Bladder retraining is a slow process and may take several months, but not having to worry about your bladder all of the time makes it worth the effort, so be patient and stick with it.

Timed Voiding

1. You will have completed a 3-day bladder diary. From this we will work out how long you are waiting between going to the toilet to pass urine.
2. We will give you a 6 week chart and record for each week how long you should wait before going to the toilet.
3. From when you get up in the morning to when you go to sleep at night you should go to the toilet at this interval, not before and not after, even if you leak.
4. Do this for one week.
5. Increase the time between toilet visits by 15 minutes each week, to a maximum of 4 hours.

What to do when you experience Urgency

As the time interval between toilet visits becomes longer it may be more difficult to hold on. If you get the urge to pass urine before it is time to go to the toilet try:

- Standing very still or if possible sitting on a hard chair.
- Distracting yourself, eg, counting backwards from 100.
- Squeezing with your pelvic floor muscles.

Whatever you do, do not panic. Stay calm and avoid moving around.

Fluid and Dietary Intake

Don't cut down how much you drink –it may make your symptoms worse. You should **aim to drink between 1½ and 2 litres (3-4 pints) of fluid** each day.

It is better to have **small drinks little and often**. Large drinks will make your bladder fill up quickly giving you the feeling of urgency.

If waking up during the night to pass urine is a problem for you, it is advisable to **avoid drinking for 3 hours before you go to bed**. It is ok to have sips of water as required or with medication.

Some types of drinks can irritate your bladder, including tea, coffee, fizzy drinks, alcohol and very acidic fruit juices. If your bladder is irritated it will not want to hold urine inside for very long. **Try drinking plain water or cordial diluted with water**. Herbal or fruit teas that do not contain caffeine are also OK.

It is important to **reduce your caffeine intake slowly** to reduce the likelihood of experiencing withdrawal symptoms such as headaches, lethargy and irritability. Try gradually replacing caffeinated drinks over a few weeks with the goal of ultimately avoiding all caffeinated drinks.

Some foods can irritate the bladder. These include artificial sweeteners, citrus fruits (such as oranges, lemons and limes), certain acidic fruits (such as pineapple, most berries and grapes) tomatoes and spicy foods.

You may wish to consider eliminating these foods from your diet one at a time to see if this makes any difference to your bladder symptoms.

Support and Advice

Your nurse will arrange a follow-up appointment in clinic or via the telephone 6-8 weeks after you start bladder retraining. If you have any questions before then, please contact the Clinical Nurse Specialists, Monday – Friday, 8.30 am – 5.00 pm:

- Sister Jane Siswick on (0161) 701 6151
- Sister Angie Bryant on (0161) 701 6150
- Sister Lucy Dwyer on (0161) 701 1873