



Saint Mary's Managed Clinical Service
Division of Gynaecology

PATIENT INFORMATION LEAFLET

FLUID MODIFICATION ADVICE

People who experience urinary incontinence often try to improve their symptoms by changing how much, what and when they drink.

RECOMMENDED INTAKE

You should aim to drink between **1.5 and 2 litres (3-4 pints)** of fluid per day.

IF YOU'RE NOT DRINKING ENOUGH

Drinking less than 1.5 litres is not good for your overall health and may also make bladder symptoms worse.

The more concentrated urine is, the more irritating it is to the bladder. So, if you drink more and dilute your urine you may actually need to go to the toilet less often and with less urgency.

IF YOU FIND IT HARD TO DRINK THE RECOMMENDED AMOUNT:

- Set yourself weekly goals of how much you are going to drink
- Start slowly, taking time to increase how much you drink
- Drink a full glass of water instead of a half glass when taking medications
- Drink when you're thirsty, plus one more
- If you don't like water, you can add cordial or have fruit tea or herbal tea
- You can increase fluid intake through ice, sugar free jelly, sugar free custard or soup – this all counts
- Make an effort to drink more in warmer months or if you have exercised to the point where you sweat

IF YOU'RE DRINKING TOO MUCH

If you are drinking significantly more than 2 litres per day, you should reduce this to within the recommended amount as this may increase the amount of times you have to pass urine. However, you will need to drink more in hot weather or if you are very active.

- Measure your cups and glasses at home. You might be drinking more than you think. Most mugs contain 300ml (1/2 pint) therefore if you have more than 6 cups of tea or coffee each day, you are drinking more than the recommended amount in hot drinks alone!

- Try drinking out of a smaller teacup instead of a mug. These usually hold about half as much liquid as a mug, therefore you can still have as many hot drinks, but easily reduce the amount that you are drinking.
- For social events, when you know drinking will be involved, save some of your fluid allowance for when you are out.
- If you find yourself getting thirsty in between drinks and are drinking the recommended amount:
 - Make sure you're not having too much salt (more than 6g a day for adults). This will make you more thirsty. Avoid adding salt to food or very salted foods such as smoked bacon and salted peanuts.
 - Rinse your mouth out with a small amount of water but don't swallow.
 - Suck sugar free mints or sweets
 - Use artificial saliva which can be bought at the pharmacy

WHEN TO DRINK

It is best to drink 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 a good idea to avoid drinking for 3 hours before you go to bed. It is ok to have sips of water if you need to or with medication.

WHAT TO DRINK

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.

REDUCE AND AVOID CAFFEINE

Caffeine can make symptoms of urgency or frequency worse because it relaxes the muscles in your pelvis and bladder. It can also reduce how long and how deeply you sleep, so you are more likely to wake up and need to go to the toilet at night.

Some women find that cutting out caffeine can improve their bladder symptoms.

It is important to reduce your caffeine intake slowly as you might experience withdrawal symptoms such as headaches, lethargy and irritability. Try gradually replacing caffeinated drinks over a few weeks with the aim to completely cut them out.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

Please follow these recommendations for at least 4 weeks to see whether your bladder symptoms improve.

If you have made these changes for at least 4 weeks and your bladder symptoms are still bothering you, please call The Warrell Unit clinic coordinator on 0161 276 6332 and ask for a bladder retraining appointment.

BLADDER DIARY

If you have not previously returned a bladder diary you will be asked to do this before being given an appointment.

If you have already been given a bladder diary, please complete it as instructed and return it to:

The Warrell Unit, Women's Outpatients Department,
St Mary's Hospital, Oxford Road
Manchester, M13 9WL

If you have not been given a bladder diary, please call The Warrell Unit clinic coordinator on 0161 276 6332 and this will be sent out for you to complete.

If we have not heard from you 12 weeks after being given this information, we will assume that your symptoms have improved and are no longer bothering you and discharge you from our service.

CONTACT DETAILS



Warrell Unit Coordinator: 0161 276 6332