

Bladder and Bowel Service

Bladder Training

When is a bladder training programme used?

Bladder training is a treatment for people who suffer from an urgent need to pass small amounts of urine more frequently than normal, who may also experience leakage with urgency.

Sometimes people with no urgency learn to pass urine frequently to avoid accidents. These people may also benefit from bladder training.

What is bladder training?

The aim of bladder training is to improve bladder control and increase the amount of urine the bladder can comfortably hold without urgency or leakage of urine. The programme teaches people to suppress the urgent desire to pass urine until a socially acceptable time and place is found. When the bladder is sensitive or over-active learning to 'hold on' can initially be difficult but usually becomes easier with practice.

The bladder training programme

Keep a bladder chart or diary to measure progress. If you haven't been given a chart by your doctor or continence advisor, simply record when and how much urine you pass and write down any accidental loss of urine.

Fill in the bladder chart for 2-4 days (including overnight). Try to gradually increase the time between visits to the toilet. Each time you get the urge to go to the toilet, try to hold on for a few minutes longer.

If you wake up during the night with a strong desire to go to the toilet, it is reasonable to go and empty the bladder right away (unless advised otherwise). As you improve by day you will gain confidence to practice the programme at night.

Some helpful hints

- When you have the urgent need to pass urine, you may find it helpful to sit down and try to take your mind off wanting to get to the toilet.
- When you do go to the toilet, walk, don't run
- Avoid going to the toilet 'just in case'
- Drink 6-8 cups of fluid over the day unless told otherwise by your doctor
- Minimise the intake of fluids which may irritate the bladder, for example, coffee, tea, cola and alcohol
- Maintain a good bowel habit by keeping your bowel regular and avoiding constipation as this can increase bladder sensitivity
- Do your pelvic floor exercises - this gives you confidence to hold on.

Will there be setbacks?

Do not be concerned with small day to day variations in your bladder pattern - these are normal for everyone. However, any person who starts a bladder training programme may experience set-backs when the symptoms seem worse again.

These may occur:

- When you are tired or run down
- During a urinary tract (bladder) infection (see the doctor immediately if you suspect this)
- At times of anxiety or emotional stress
- When the weather is wet, windy or cold
- During times of illness e.g. cold or flu

If this does happen, do not be discouraged. Think positively and keep trying. Further information and support can be obtained from your GP or local Bladder and Bowel service