

Bladder and Bowel Service

Urgency

What is a normal bladder habit?

It is normal for an adult with a reasonable fluid intake to pass one to two cups full of urine each time the bladder is emptied (between 250-400ml) during the day and maybe once at night. This may increase slightly with age. As we get older our bladder capacity may get a little smaller, so we need to pass urine a little more often, including once or twice a night.

Urgency is the symptom of having to hurry to pass urine.

Frequency is when you need to go to the toilet a lot, eight or more times in 24 hours, but only pass small amounts of urine.

What can you do about it?

Whatever the cause there are certain rules to follow to help control your symptoms:

- Do not reduce your fluid intake. Far from helping this may make your problem much worse, and can also cause constipation
- Have approximately 1½ litres of decaffeinated fluid per day
- Try to avoid drinks containing caffeine, which is found in tea, green tea, coffee, chocolate and cola - reduce gradually to avoid headaches, moods etc.
- Fizzy drinks may also exacerbate your symptoms
- Some people also find it helpful to avoid citric drinks such as orange, lemon, lime, grapefruit and tangerine as they can irritate the bladder. Blackcurrant is a natural diuretic.
- Avoid passing urine “just in case”
- Try to increase the amount of time between visits to the toilet
- Do not try to hold on at night - it will only keep you awake. Practising holding on in the daytime will gradually help night time problems
- If you have been given water tablets you must take them no matter how often they make you want to go. Discuss this problem with your nurse or doctor
- If you are overweight try to lose some weight as this relieves stress on the pelvic floor. You may be able to obtain help via your GP regarding accessing dietary and exercise options
- Be careful with your diet – too much or too little fibre is not good for you. Try changing your diet to see what works best for you