

Bladder retraining

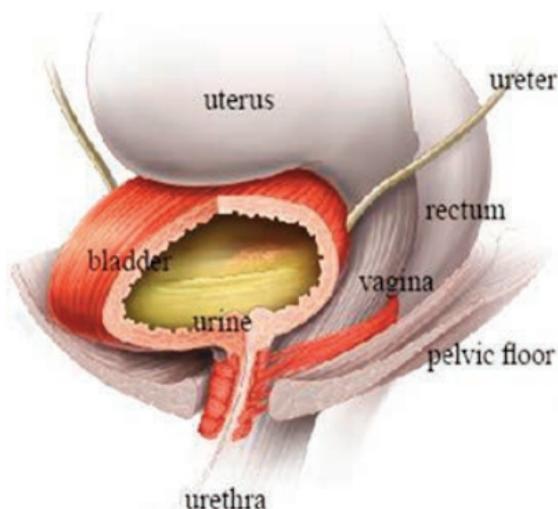


Who is this leaflet for?

This leaflet is designed to give help and advice to those suffering with an overactive bladder.

What is an overactive bladder?

If your bladder contracts without any warning this can give you an urgent need to pass urine, giving you little or no time to get to the toilet. This is known as overactive bladder or urinary urgency. People who suffer with this problem may also have to pass urine more frequently, often in smaller volumes. This happens because the bladder feels fuller than it actually is.



Normal bladder, half full and relaxed



Overactive bladder, half full but contracting,
leading to urinary leakage

What is bladder retraining?

Bladder retraining is about getting rid of bad habits, learning good habits and putting you back in control, rather than your bladder controlling you. This can help regain bladder control and reduce the urge to pass urine by suppressing its contractions and increasing the volume that your bladder can hold. Bladder training is about filtering the messages being sent from your bladder to your brain and understanding which messages to ignore and which to listen to.

How can I reduce the urge to go?

The tips below will help you to hold on, overcome the urgency and stop leakage.

- Don't drink all your fluids at once. Divide the intake at regular intervals through the day.
- Try not to take any fluids two hours before going to bed. This will help reduce your visits to the toilet at night.
- Sit down / stand still.
- Do not tighten your abdominal muscles.
- Take a couple of deep breaths and stay calm.
- Acknowledge the feeling, but remember urgency does not always mean that the bladder is full.
- Contract / squeeze your pelvic floor muscles (your healthcare professional, specialist nurse or physiotherapist can teach you). This helps to 'switch off' the bladder and close the outlet tube (urethra).
- Sitting on the edge of a firm chair may help.
- Mental distraction, for example, counting backwards from 500 in lots of 8 may also help.

How do I prepare for bladder retraining?

- Make sure a bladder infection is ruled out.
- Fill in a bladder diary.

When should I start the bladder retraining programme?

It is important to start bladder retraining as soon as is practically possible as it can take several weeks to notice improvement.

What is the bladder retraining programme?

- Drink 1.5 litres of fluid daily. In this fluid intake, try to have at least 4 mugs/glasses of still water at room temperature. Avoid caffeinated drinks eg. coffee, tea, fizzy drinks, hot chocolate and artificial sweeteners.
- You can drink decaffeinated tea and coffee or fruit teas, but try not to have more than a couple of these in total in 24 hours.
- Avoid alcohol.
- When you get the urge to pass urine, don't go to the toilet straight away. Instead use the techniques explained above to help you to hold.
- The aim is to hold longer as time goes by so that your bladder learns how to fill up and stay relaxed:
 - Week 1: hold for 5 minutes
 - Week 2: hold for 10 minutes
 - Week 3: hold for 15 minutes
 - Week 4: hold for 20 minutes
 - Week 5: hold for 25 minutes
 - Week 6: hold for 30 minutes.

- The 'urge' feeling can be the first sign that your bladder is filling up but it may subside. Try to carry on as normal until it is time to go to the toilet.
- When you go to the toilet, don't rush. Sit down on the seat and stay there for a bit longer until you are sure you have finished weeing completely. Try not to push or strain to empty your bladder.

The success of the programme depends on how carefully you can follow and apply the advice given above.

Further information

Further information is available from:

www.baus.org.uk/patients/conditions/5/incontinence_of_urine

www.nhs.uk/conditions/urinary-incontinence/treatment/

www.bladderhealthuk.org/

www.yourpelvicfloor.org/conditions/bladder-training/

www.baus.org.uk/_userfiles/pages/files/Patients/Leaflets/Bladder%20training.pdf

If you would like this leaflet in large print, braille, audio version or in another language, please contact the General Office on 01872 252690

