

Bladder Retraining Drills

Bladder retraining helps you to regain control of urination by breaking the cycle of frequency (the need to urinate more often than normal), urgency (the sense of needing to urinate quickly), and incontinence (leaking urine accidentally).

What is normal, and why do I go so often?

Normally, you should be completely unaware as your bladder fills for 3 to 5 hours with 300 to 500cc of urine. When the bladder is full, you should be able to suppress the urge to void until you are safely on the toilet. For reasons that are unclear, some women begin to feel full after a short time and lose the ability to suppress the urge to void, which can cause urgency or even leakage of urine.

What are bladder retraining drills?

Bladder retraining drills work to increase the time between voids. The success rate with bladder drills is high, with up to 85% of women becoming dry or drier. Bladder drills have no side effects.

How do I start?

You should void on a regular schedule, even if you do not feel the urge to urinate. If you need to void early, try to distract yourself (see tips below) to delay voiding. If you cannot wait, go ahead and void but start your time over again. Do not worry about this schedule while you are sleeping.

For the first 14 days, void every 2 hours
For the next 14 days, void every 2.5 hours
For the next 14 days, void every 3 hours.

Continue increasing the time interval until you are voiding every 3 to 4 hours (or at an interval that is comfortable). Try to maintain this interval indefinitely.

If you have questions or problems, please call the office. After 2 to 3 months, you should feel much better—fewer trips to the bathroom during the day and the night, fewer accidents, and the renewed ability to suppress the urge to void.

Distraction Tips

If you feel the urge to void before it is time, try the following techniques.

Stand or sit still until the urge passes

Cross your legs

Take 3 slow breaths and relax your belly muscles

Squeeze your pelvic floor muscles tightly (Kegels) several times in rapid succession

Fluid Management

Fluid management, along with bladder retraining drills, is very successful in improving or curing symptoms of overactive bladder

To normalize fluids, you should drink **no more or less** than _____ ounces every hour during the day. Remember that all fluids count—a bowl of soup or milk on your cereal might be 8 ounces.

You may combine 2 consecutive hours if you wish, and drink _____ ounces in one hour, and then none in the next hour.

If you have difficulty with waking from sleep to empty your bladder, avoid drinking any liquids after dinner.

Bladder Training

1. What is bladder training?
2. How do I regain bladder control?
3. How to overcome frequency?
4. How to overcome urgency and urge leakage?
5. How successful is bladder retraining?

Introduction

Many women experience bladder problems at some time in their lives. Three of the most common problems are frequency, urgency and urge leakage. Frequency means going to the toilet more than 8 or more times a day. If you get up to go to the toilet more than once at night this is called *nocturia*. *Urgency* is the sudden and overwhelming feeling that you need to go to the toilet RIGHT NOW, and if you leak when you feel like this, it is called *urge leakage*.

What is bladder training?

Bladder training is about getting rid of bad habits, learning good habits and putting you back in control, rather than your bladder controlling you and your life.

Research has shown that many women find bladder training reduces frequency, urgency and urge leakage.

How do I regain bladder control?

1. Bladder retraining programs help you to increase the time between visits to the toilet, help you increase the amount your bladder will hold, and help you to control the feelings of urgency when the bladder contracts unnecessarily. Bladder retraining is about helping yourself to regain bladder control.

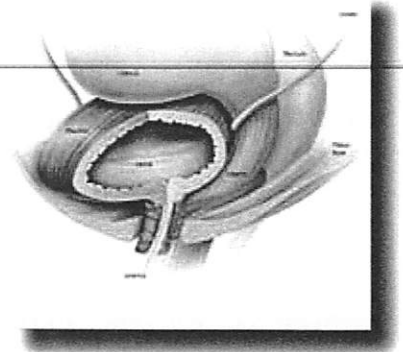
2. Part of a bladder training program is learning to understand the messages that your bladder is sending you, which messages you need to listen to, and which messages you can ignore.

Before you Begin

1. The first thing to do is check that you do not have a bladder infection. This can be achieved by testing a sample of your urine by a physician.

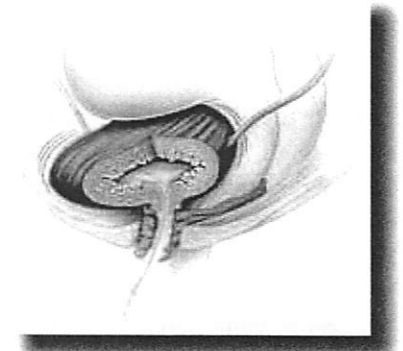
2. The next thing you will need to do is fill out a bladder diary. From a bladder diary you can see how often you are going to the toilet, what amount your bladder can hold, what amount and type of fluid you are drinking, and how often you are bothered by urgency and urge leakage. You can compare a diary from the beginning of treatment with a diary taken after treatment to see how much change there has been.

A bladder training program should also help you to recognize when your bladder is full, and when it isn't.



Normal bladder, half full and relaxed

3. Your bladder may have taken many weeks, months or years learning its bad habits so you will not regain your bladder control instantly. It will take time, commitment and patience to retrain your bladder into good habits. Be encouraged, most people notice some improvement within 2 weeks, although it may take 3 months or more to regain bladder control.



Overactive bladder, half full but contracting, causing urinary leakage

How to overcome frequency?

1. Check your urinary diary. How often are you going to the toilet during the day? If the visits are less than 2-3 hours apart you need to try and increase the time between visits to the toilet. For example, if you are going every hour, set your target at an hour and 15 minutes. If you get the feeling of urgency before your time is up, try some of the ideas in the next section to control this feeling and make the bladder wait.

Time	Drink	Urine passed	Urge	Leakage & Activity	Pad change	Underwear changed	Outer clothing changed
6:00am		300ml	✓	getting up		✓	
7:00am	Tea 150ml						
7:15am		50ml					
8:10am	Coffee 150ml						

Sample Bladder Diary. You may download the Bladder Diary template for printing at _____

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2. If you can hold on for your target time, and can do this for 3 or 4 days in a row, increase the time again. Gradually increase the time between visits to the toilet until you are going every 2-3 hours during the day.

3. Try to cut down the visits to the toilet that you make 'just in case'. For example, ask yourself if you really do need to go every time you leave the house.
– If you only went 20 minutes ago perhaps you don't. A normal bladder comfortably holds 400mls, which is nearly 2 cupfuls.

How to overcome urgency and urge leakage?

Try all of these ideas to control the urgency and make the bladder wait. See which ideas work best for you and then use them when you need to.

1. Tighten your pelvic floor muscles as hard as you can and hold on for as long as you can. Keep doing this until the feeling of urgency goes away or is under control. Contracting the pelvic floor muscles helps to squeeze the *urethra* (tube from the bladder) shut and prevent leakage.
2. Tighten your pelvic floor muscles quickly and as hard as you can, then let go. Repeat this several times in a row. Some women find that several contractions in a row work better than trying to hold on to a contraction for a long time.
3. Put firm pressure on the perineum (crotch area). You can do this by crossing your legs or sitting down on a firm surface. This also sends a message to the bladder via the nerves that the outlet from the bladder is closed so it should wait before it tries to empty.
4. Distract your mind as best you can. For example, some people start to count backwards from 100 but any form of mental distraction or relaxation is good.
5. Change your position if this decreases the feeling of urgency. Some people find that leaning forward a little helps.
6. Stay still when you get an urgent bladder contraction and control the urge. You will not be able to hold on, stay in control, and rush to the toilet all at the same time.
7. Try not to jiggle up and down on the spot. Movement jolts the bladder and may make the problem worse.

How successful is bladder retraining?

Bladder training (and pelvic floor muscle training if appropriate) helps 1 out of every 2 to 3 women with urge leakage. Remember, when you have successfully retrained your bladder into good habits you need to practice these habits for the rest of your life.

Extra Tips to Help with Bladder Control

Sometimes there are other changes you can make that will help to improve bladder control. If you are overweight, have a problem that makes you cough a lot (eg asthma, bronchitis) or suffer from constipation, you should discuss this with the doctor, physiotherapist or continence advisor, as all these things can make urinary leakage worse. Some medications make it more difficult to control the bladder, and you should check with your doctor if you have any worries about this.

1. Drink normally, at least 6-8 cups (1000-1500mls) of fluid per day unless advised otherwise by your doctor. Don't stop drinking because you think it will stop you leaking. If you drink too little the urine becomes very concentrated. This irritates the bladder and makes it want to empty more often even when there is very little in it. A lack of fluids can also lead to urinary tract infections.
2. Don't drink all your fluids at once. Space your fluid intake out during the day. If you drink a lot at once, you can expect the need to go to the toilet urgently not too long afterwards.
3. Some drinks seem to irritate the bladder and make you want to go to the toilet more often. Usually these are alcohol and drinks with caffeine in them such as coffee, tea, Coca-Cola, chocolate drinks and carbonated energy drinks; try and reduce caffeinated drinks to 1 or 2 cups a day.
4. Avoid drinking within two hours of going to bed as this increases your chances of getting up at night.