

Bladder Retraining (timed voiding)

Bladder retraining is a simple form of behavioral therapy designed to reduce problems with frequency (going to often), urgency (needing to pass urine without delay), and urge incontinence (leaking with urgency). It involves voiding by the clock, not by how you feel, gradually increasing the time between voids until a normal interval of 3-4 hours is reached. In this way you reestablish voluntary control over your bladder, reversing your bladder's control over you. Studies show a 50-60% improvement using this technique. Combined with avoiding bladder irritants (bladder diet), and in some cases, medications, success increases.

We all get the gradual desire to void as the bladder fills. That desire grows as the bladder volume increases. Bad bladder habits are developed by: emptying at the first desire; "going just in case"; running to the toilet when the urge comes and keeping empty so leaking will not occur. This leads to messages from your bladder that it is always full when it is not. Once developed, bad bladder habits are hard to undo; but with persistence, patience and a little work it can be accomplished. *Success WILL happen and depends upon your motivation.* It is up to you.

The "How To" of Bladder Retraining

Keeping an initial bladder diary is very important. This determines the correct starting interval and helps to monitor your progress throughout the program.

1. Empty your bladder first thing in the morning.
2. Void throughout the day ***by the clock***, not by how you feel. Start with every _____ hours. Wait the full amount of time to urinate and empty **even if** you do not feel the urge to. Empty at bedtime and at night, go only if you awaken and find it necessary.
3. If you feel a strong urge before it is time to void, use the following **urge suppression** techniques:
 - a. **Do Not** rush to the bathroom. Think about *anything* but the toilet (what you made for dinner last night, what you are doing tonight, count backward by 7s from 100, etc).
 - b. Perform 5 quick pelvic floor muscle "squeezes" (Kegals) wait 10 seconds and repeat.
 - c. Take 3 slow deep breaths, concentrating on the "in and out".
4. Once you are comfortable with this interval for 5-7 days, increase it by 15-30 minutes.
5. Gradually increase in this way until you are voiding at a normal **3-4** hour interval.
6. Keep a diary twice a week to measure and document progress. Only measure the *interval* of your voids (times) and do not worry about voided volumes during this time.
7. Be patient. It will take from 6-12 weeks to reach your goal. Don't get discouraged. You will have good and bad days. As you continue, you will notice more good days.
8. Keep your scheduled visits and bring your diaries. *We are here to support you.*

See other side for helpful hints

Good Toileting Habits

Normal Voiding Frequency

Normal frequency (how many times you urinate) during waking hours for adults is seven to eight times. During sleeping hours, waking once to urinate is normal for people under the age of 65. As a person ages, the bladder capacity, or how much it holds, becomes a little less. Seniors may suddenly find that they need to get up twice at night.

Amount of fluid intake

The amount of fluid you drink depends upon your weight, activity, diet, body temperature and other factors. The “right” amount is different for everyone. The 8-ounce glasses of water a day is a myth. Do not severely reduce your intake to avoid going to the bathroom or leaking. The goal is pale yellow urine without a strong odor.

What to Drink

Water is best. Avoid such bladder irritants as caffeine (in coffee, decaf coffee, tea, dark sodas, and yes, chocolate), alcohol, acidic juices and vegetables, sugar, artificial sweeteners, spicy foods among others. A complete list is contained in our bladder “diet”.

Some other “Do’s”

- Spread your fluid intake throughout the day.
- Restrict your intake after 6 or 7 pm especially if you have a problem getting up at night.
- Empty your bladder completely. Give it time. Some women need to “double void”.
- Empty before intercourse.
- Use dietary or supplemental fiber as constipation profoundly affects your bladder.
- Wear clothing that is easy to manage when voiding.
- Arrange your toileting environment at home so that it is easy for you to access.
- Give yourself positive reinforcement.

Some “Don’ts”

- Do not rush to the bathroom with an urge. You will lose the race every time.
- Do not go “just in case”.
- Don’t give up on bad days

Remember

Bladder retraining combined with the suggestions above can:

1. Reduce the number of times you go to 7 or 8 a day.
2. Increase the time between voids to 3 to 4 hours.
3. Reduce or eliminate the feeling of urgency.
4. Reduce or eliminate urinary “accidents”.
5. Reduce anxiety and increase confidence about your bladder.
6. Restore your personal and social functioning to “give you back your life”.

***Be Motivated, Be Patient, Be Persistent
You CAN Win
Success Depends On YOU!***