

Urology

Bladder retraining

You have been referred to the Urology department because you are having bladder or prostate problems. This advice may improve your symptoms.

Fluid advice

Changing your drinking habits may help you improve your urinary symptoms. The amount that you drink is almost equal to the amount that you pass. Some types of fluid can make you want to pass urine more often than others. This is because they stimulate your kidneys to produce urine more quickly. Fluids that do this often contain alcohol or caffeine. These can irritate your bladder lining making you want to pass urine more urgently and more often.

What should you drink?

You should cut down or avoid the following drinks:

- Tea
- Alcohol
- Coke
- Concentrated fruit juice
- Coffee

Some drinks can help with your urinary symptoms such as decaffeinated tea, coffee, water, and squash. (For example: orange squash, lemon barley).



How much should you drink and when?

You should drink around 2 litres (3 - 4 pints) a day. If you are getting up more than once or twice a night to pass urine you may find it helpful to avoid drinks for about three hours before you go to bed. It is also important to make sure that you empty your bladder just before you go to bed.

If you are taking water tablets because of other medical problems, you may find that this advice does not help you. You should continue to take all prescribed medication.

Retraining your bladder

Many men with bladder or prostate problems find that they have little warning when they want to pass urine (urgency) and may need to pass water often (frequency). Bladder retraining is one way of improving the symptoms of frequency and urgency. Other ways are pelvic floor exercises and medication. The aim of retraining your bladder is to get back to emptying your bladder no more than six or eight times a day.

To start retraining your bladder you should keep a diary of how often you pass urine and how much you pass for one week. You can then work out how often you pass urine and the amount that you passed. You can then set your first target. If your diary shows that you have been passing urine every hour, your first target might be to pass urine only every hour and a quarter.

The following techniques may help you "hold on" for the extra amount of time:

- Sit on a hard seat or across a tightly rolled towel. This will put pressure on the pelvic floor and help you to control the urge to pass urine.
- Tighten your pelvic floor muscle five times. This sends a message to your bladder, which helps to calm it down.
- Do something to distract you from the urge to pass urine, such as reading the paper, watching the television, or listening to the radio.

Once you have reached your first target, set a new one. This might be to pass urine every hour and half. Continue in this way until your symptoms have improved and you are visiting the toilet every three to four hours. At this stage, the amount of urine that you are passing should have

Patient Information

increased. You can check this by repeating the diary that you kept at the beginning of your bladder retraining.

Remember

- It may take several weeks or months to get back into a normal pattern of going to the toilet.
- Once you are back in control of your bladder you should not go longer than 4 to 5 hours without passing urine (except at night) as your bladder does not work as well if it is over filled.
- Pelvic floor exercises can also help to improve your bladder symptoms.

If you would like any further information, please contact Sarah Roth (Clinical Nurse Specialist for Continence and Urology) on 024 7696 5296 or Susan Ferguson (Assistant Practitioner in Urology) on 02476 965226.

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