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**PATIENT INFORMATION:
BLADDER TRAINING**

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Bladder training is a method of treating problems with urinary frequency and urgency and a way of helping you to control any 'urge' leaks from the bladder.

Frequency is the need to empty the bladder with only a short time period between visits to the toilet.

Urgency is the really strong need to pass urine, which if ignored could cause leakage of urine.

Urge leaks happen suddenly for example when you stand up from a chair or get out of bed; when you put the key in the door after going out shopping; when running a tap; or on the way to the bathroom. There might be a unique trigger that you have that sets off this response.

The aim of bladder training is train the bladder to hold on. The bladder functions best when it is given larger volumes to hold. The more frequently you empty your bladder, the more frequently you will need to empty your bladder. You should encourage the bladder to hold on longer by increasing the volumes of fluids that you drink during the day and increasing the time intervals between passing urine. A specialist physiotherapist will be able to guide you.

Delaying tactics Ignoring some of the signals from the bladder to enable it to hold on longer. The following 'delaying tactics' will be helpful to postpone the urge to pass urine and to improve bladder control.

First, pull up the pelvic floor muscles instantly. It does not have to be a maximal contraction but will need to be strong enough to close the urethra. Maintain this strength for 20-30 seconds. This will enable the bladder to relax. Remind yourself of all the times you have held on before. Stay still whether sitting, standing or lying. Pull the legs tightly together. Pull the toes up. Sit on a hard surface eg. the arm of a chair. Mental distraction is very powerful, when you concentrate on something else your symptoms will calm down.

When you feel the urge to empty your bladder pass, say the following to yourself over and over again. 'This is easy, I've held on before, I can again now and I'll be waiting another 20 seconds when I get into the toilet.'

When you get to the toilet keep saying to yourself 'I am still waiting for another 30 seconds' and only when you have sat on the toilet for another 2 seconds, then allow yourself to empty your bladder.

Helpful hints

Build up the time intervals between passing urine. It may be easier to begin by being in a safe place, such as the bathroom (only when you have the urge to pass urine). Take your watch in with you. You may only be able to hold for 30 seconds initially, and then gradually increase this time to a minute, the one and a half minutes etc. By the time you can manage 5 minutes in there you will know that you can hold for longer when you are out.

Set yourself an achievable time to work towards. Remember that the average time between passing urine is 3-4 hours. When you improve the holding time of the bladder during the day, it will reduce the amount of times you need to get up in the night to pass urine.

There are various elements that might affect your symptoms, if you notice this happening, increase your pelvic floor exercises to counteract the effects. Most importantly, persevere

with your exercises and focus on improving your symptoms and a successful outcome. The results will be determined by your efforts.

Normal bladder function

This will give you an idea of how the 'average' bladder behaves:

Average bladder capacity – 500 ml

Average volume passed – 250-300 ml

Average time interval between voids – 3-4 hours

Average frequency of voiding – 5-7 times a day and once at night

You should aim to drink between 1.5–2 litres of fluid a day.

Keeping a bladder diary will show the emptying patterns, volumes, frequency and effects that various fluids will have on your bladder.

Tea, coffee, chocolate, cola, alcohol and fizzy drinks are stimulants and bladder irritants, which make the bladder fill quickly and will aggravate symptoms. You should replace these drinks with other fluids such as water and fruit or herbal teas, weak squash or diluted juices.

It is healthy to drink around 8 drinks every day; that is roughly 3 pints or 1.5litres of fluid.

Be aware that over-drinking will make symptoms of frequency worse.

This leaflet is for information only and should not replace advice that your relevant healthcare professional would give you. Please keep this information and use it to help you if you have any further questions or queries.