

Bladder Retraining

The Bladder has 2 jobs:

- It must store urine by relaxing and allowing urine to collect
- It must expel urine by contracting fully

Normal bladder capacity allows a person to urinate every 2 to 5 hours during the day. This results in 5 to 8 trips to the bathroom per day.

Common Definitions:

- Frequency of urination: An average void interval(time between going to the bathroom) of less than 2 hours
- Urgency: A strong urge to urinate associated with an outside event such as: exposure to cold, running water, walking by the bathroom, putting the key in the lock
- Urge Incontinence: Loss of urine associated with a strong urge to urinate.

There are many reasons why the above conditions occur. Frequency is often a result of habits (going to the bathroom just in case). After many years of bad habits the bladder begins to signal a need to urinate before it has reached its full capacity. The bladder begins to rule the brain, if allowed. The bladder will signal the need to urinate at smaller and smaller amounts resulting in frequency of urination. This may progress to urge incontinence. Bladder Retraining will help you take control over your bladder. It uses the same neurological pathways that you used when your were toilet trained many years ago. Some medical conditions may limit the effectiveness of this treatment but almost all patients find they gain some benefit.

Simply stated: this technique involves increasing time between urinating to train the bladder to hold more urine.

Bladder Retraining stops while you are sleeping at night: Do NOT wake yourself up to maintain a bladder schedule

When you experience a strong urge to urinate use these **Urge Suppression Strategies:**

- Stop moving and sit down. Pressure on the perineum will help inhibit the bladder
- Relax: Take deep breaths. Rushing to the bathroom is the worst thing you can do during a strong urge. The more anxious you are, the more anxious your bladder will be.
- Distract: focus on something other than your bladder. Concentrate on something else. Some people count backwards from 100 by 7's, others become busy with a task instead of focusing on their bladder. Ignore your bladder's 'showing off'.
- Do small Kegel contractions. Maximal contractions may result in leakage. Perform small, short, 10-20% maximal contractions.

When the urge dissipates try to wait until your next urge or a specific time (such as 2 hours from your last urination). If it has already been 2 hours since your last urination once the urge dissipates slowly walk to the bathroom to urinate.

Strengthening, isolation and coordination of the pelvic floor muscles will assist in the effectiveness of bladder retraining so remember to do your kegels.

Instead of simply delaying your urge to void your Therapist may assist you with setting up a voiding interval.

Option 1: Go to the bathroom to urinate no sooner than every ____ hours

Option2: Go to the bathroom to urinate every ____ hours whether you need to or not

When you are able to easily go to the bathroom to urinate on the prescribed schedule without incontinence you may increase the interval by 15-30 minutes. Continue to increase the interval until you have reached the normal voiding interval of 2-5 hours without incontinence.