

BLADDER RETRAINING

(Adapted from the documents produced by the
British Association of Urological Surgeons and National Incontinence, USA)

What is it?

Bladder retraining, also referred to as 'bladder training' or 'bladder drill' in some departments, essentially means teaching your bladder, with practice, how to hold urine for longer than it currently is doing.

What am I trying to achieve?

To be able to hold urine for 2 to 4 hours during the day without fear of leaking.

How do I perform bladder retraining?

Essentially, you try to urinate by the clock rather than by the urge. When you feel the urge to pass urine, tell yourself you are not going to.

- Work out from your bladder diary your average interval between two visits to the toilet; let us say you are currently passing urine every 30 minutes
- For a week (or longer, if needed), every time you have the urge, postpone going to the toilet for 15 minutes by distracting yourself (using whatever method works for you – some examples are given below) and stick to this time-schedule (i.e. go every 45 minutes) regardless of whether you need to go or not
- The following week, add a further 15 minutes (i.e. go every hour regardless of whether you need to or not) and this way, keep adding 15 minutes every week until you are comfortably holding for 2 to 4 hours
- By all means, if you need to spend longer than a week with a particular time-schedule, do so. You should be able to hold comfortably for that length of time before moving on
- Similarly, if postponing for 15 minutes seems impossible, add 5 minutes at a time

How long does it take?

Please be persistent, it may take a few months before you regain full control over your bladder. Early on, you may have a few accidents in spite of performing this retraining. Do not be discouraged, with time these episodes will be less frequent.

What do I do if I get a very strong urge to go before the scheduled time?

This is quite likely to happen initially. Try one or more of the following distraction techniques:

- Squeeze the pelvic floor muscles strongly, count up to 5 and then slowly relax. Repeat this 3 to 5 times.
- Take a few deep breaths in and out and concentrate on your breathing instead of the bladder.
- Count backwards from 100

Is there anything else I can do?

- Cutting down on alcohol, fizzy drinks and caffeine and stopping smoking may help
- Drink between 1.5 to 2 litres of fluid a day
- Avoid constipation