

Physiotherapy for overactive bladder

Information for patients

Bladder problems are most often “frequency” or “urgency” problems. These may affect your daily life.

What is “frequency”?

Frequency is when you go to the toilet to pass urine more than 8 times in 24 hours and more than once per night.

What is “urgency”?

Urgency is when you have very little warning of the need to pass urine. There may be times where you don't make it in time and leak urine.

What causes bladder problems?

Bladder problems can happen for many reasons.

- Anxiety
- Constipation
- Infection
- Drinking fluids containing caffeine, alcohol and fizzy drinks, including fizzy water
- Medication
- Hormonal changes (menopause)
- Pregnancy and childbirth
- Pelvic surgery
- Prostate problems.

You are not alone - many people have this problem.

Do you have any of the following bladder problems?

- Strong, sudden need to pass urine (perhaps when you put your key in the door or when washing dishes)
- Sometimes leaking before you get to the toilet
- Are you always asking “where are the toilets?”
- Do you often pass only small amounts of urine when you go to the toilet?

If so, there may be a simple problem with your bladder for which help is available.

How to calm your bladder

The techniques below will help you hold on for longer and also help you get to the toilet dry.

- When the sensation of urgency comes on, try to stay calm and concentrate your attention on your breathing. Breathe in slowly from your nose and breathe out from your mouth. Usually the sensation will pass after a few seconds.

Additionally you can

- Curl up your toes by imagining you are picking up pencils
- Contract your pelvic floor muscle
- Sit down on the edge of a chair
- Stop and stand still when you get the sensation of urgency
- Press your thighs together when standing - it is a little less obvious than crossing your legs
- Lift your heels repeatedly off the ground
- Repeat again if necessary.

What can I do to help myself?

- Slowly cut down your caffeine and fizzy drinks intake (such as: coffee, tea, cola, Irn Bru)
- Try to drink 1½-2 litres daily - water is best - avoid drinking large amounts at once, rather little and often throughout the day
- Don't go to the toilet "just in case"
- Try to delay your time between visits to the toilet. You can start delaying for only 1-2 minutes and gradually build up. Pick a time when you are less anxious
- When you feel an urge, try to think of something else – distract yourself and breath slowly
- Give yourself plenty of time to empty your bladder when you go to the toilet. After you think you are finished take a few seconds to rock forward, sit back, move side to side, or even stand up, sit down to ensure you are finished and avoid leaking urine when you walk away.

Your Physiotherapist also recommends:

After looking at your bladder diary we suggest you:

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Pelvic floor exercises

Try to do your pelvic floor exercises in different positions e.g. lying, sitting, and standing and in positions where you leak.

1. Gently squeeze and pull up your pelvic floor muscles.
Hold for _____ seconds (max 10) Repeat _____ times (max 10)
2. Gently squeeze and pull up your pelvic floor muscles, just for a second before relaxing
Try to do _____ (max 10)

Do these 2 exercises _____ times per day (max 5).

Consider using the 'NHS Squeezy' app <https://squeezyapp.com/>



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