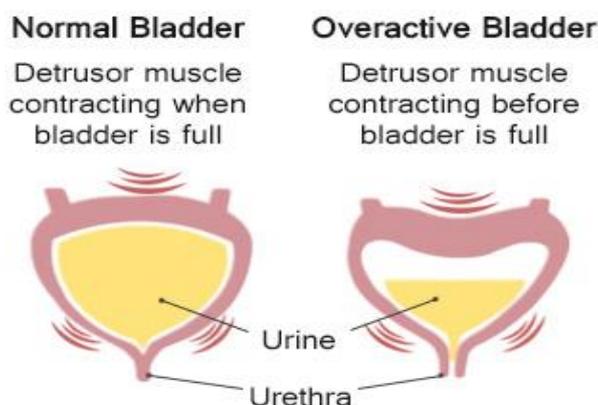


Overactive Bladder and Bladder Re-training

What is an overactive bladder?

The bladder is a muscle that stores urine until you are ready to empty it. It is sometimes called the Detrusor muscle. When we are ready to pass urine, our bladder squeezes to empty itself. In an overactive bladder, it squeezes before you are ready. If you are not next to the toilet, you may experience urinary leakage (incontinence). It is a very common condition in men and women and often the cause is unknown. An overactive bladder can affect people of all ages.



<http://drmagaziner.com/metabolic-syndrome-symptoms/overactive-bladder-in-aging-men-and-women/>

What are the symptoms of an Overactive Bladder?

An Overactive Bladder regularly causes a sudden urge to pass urine, which can be difficult to put off. It can cause you to pass urine too frequently in the daytime or at night. Overactive bladder may cause leakage of urine before reaching the toilet. This is called **Urinary Urge Incontinence**. Other people may not leak urine, but experience **Urinary Urgency** and **Frequency**. It may disrupt sleep and affect everyday living. It can be an embarrassing and frustrating problem.

What is normal bladder function?

- The bladder will hold between 300ml and 600ml of urine when full
- We pass urine between 4 – 8 times per day
- People under 60 may pass urine up 0 – 1 times per night.
- People over 60 may pass urine up to twice per night.

You may have been asked to complete a 3 day bladder diary. This allows the clinician to see how much urine your bladder holds and how often you need to pass urine before treatment.

How much fluid should I drink per day?

To maintain a healthy bladder, it is important that you do not become dehydrated. Concentrated urine can irritate the bladder and make urgency worse. Drinking too little can also increase risk of infection and cause constipation. We should drink approximately 8 drinks per day (3-4 pints or 1.5 –2 litres); unless you have a medical condition and have been advised differently. If you go to the toilet a lot overnight (nocturia) try to reduce fluids 2-3 hours before going to bed.

What should I drink?

Caffeine can make an overactive bladder worse. Caffeine can be found in tea, coffee and cola drinks. Reducing caffeine and stopping it altogether can help your symptoms. Do this slowly as you can get withdrawal headaches! There are many decaffeinated alternatives in the shops. Other drinks that can affect your bladder are fizzy drinks, acidic fruit juices and artificial sweeteners. Water, milk and dilute juice should not irritate the bladder (avoiding diet, reduced sugar and no added sugar drinks).



www.bladderandbowelfoundation.org

Other factors that can affect your bladder function

Medication Some medication can result in urinary frequency or urgency, for example diuretics (water pills). Please speak to your clinician or doctor if you think your medication is affecting your bladder.

Weight gain – Being overweight can make your bladder problem worse. Please seek advice from your G.P if you would like to lose weight.

Constipation may cause you to strain when opening your bowels. This can weaken the pelvic floor muscles over time, making your bladder symptoms worse. It is important to try to avoid constipation with a healthy diet, adequate fluid intake and exercise, if possible. If you are still constipated, seek advice from your G.P. Medication may be recommended.

Urine infection – If you have symptoms of infection, such as pain on passing urine, going to the toilet more often or blood in the urine, tell your G.P straight away. This is easily treated but should not be ignored.

Pelvic Floor weakness - If these muscles are weak, it is harder to hold onto urine or stool. Practicing **Pelvic Floor Muscle Exercises** often helps to improve urinary incontinence.

What is Bladder Re-training?

The purpose of bladder training is to help you take back control of your bladder. This can be achieved by increasing the time interval between voids. Instead of rushing to the toilet, as soon as you get the urge to pass urine, it is important to try to hold on a few minutes longer. You might find this difficult at first. The following techniques may help:

- try to keep calm. Avoid rushing to the toilet
- distract yourself by concentrating on something else
- sit on a firm surface and pull up your pelvic floor muscles for 10 seconds (if you can) or a series of short squeezes.
- if you are not able to sit, stand still and wait as the urge may wear off
- cross your legs, if able press up against your pelvic floor with your hand

The aim of bladder training is to gradually increase how much urine your bladder can hold whilst keeping control. Evidence shows that bladder training can reduce the feeling of urgency, frequency and urinary incontinence. The training can take weeks but is often successful. Try to keep going and keep positive!

Latch key urgency is common in people with overactive bladder. This describes the strong urgency triggered when you arrive at home, as you put your key in the door or when you are near to a toilet. If you experience this, try the tips listed below. Try not to worry if this takes a while to master. As you progress with bladder training, this should improve.

- Sitting in your car, and tightening your pelvic floor muscles for at least 10 seconds.
- Once at the door – stand still and cross your legs as you open the door

- Calmly put your bags down. Count to 60 before making your way to the toilet.
- Gradually increase the amount of time between getting in your home and going to the toilet.

Try to avoid passing urine 'just in case'

If you worry about being incontinent, it may be that you pass urine 'just in case'. Emptying your bladder before it is needed, can lead to a smaller bladder capacity, making urgency and frequency worse. The bladder is designed to be stretched and hold urine. If we void too often (for example hourly), our bladder capacity will be very small. Try bladder training, over the coming months, to improve your confidence in your bladder and improve the holding power of your bladder.

Incomplete bladder emptying

If you feel your bladder has not emptied fully, or if you dribble when you stand up from the toilet, try the following:

- wait a little longer once you have finished before standing up
- when still sat on the toilet try rocking forwards and backward. Alternatively, you may stand up to do this, before sitting back down again
- tap over your lower abdomen
do not strain to empty
- tighten your pelvic floor before you stand up

What if bladder training and lifestyle changes don't improve my bladder function?

There are other effective treatments available for Overactive Bladder. These include medication. Talk to your health care professional about your options or ask for referral to a local specialist service.

Further Sources of information

- Bladder and Bowel UK <https://www.bbuk.org.uk>
- HDFT Continence Service Webpage
<https://www.hdft.nhs.uk/services/specialist-continence-service-2/>
- Harrogate Health Hub <https://www.harrogatehealthhub.co.uk/wmhphysiotherapy>
- NICE Urinary incontinence and pelvic organ prolapse in women 2019
<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng123/informationforpublic>

Contact details

HDFT Women's and Men's Health Physiotherapy Department
HDFT Specialist Continence Service

01423 553472
01423 557495

If you require this information in an alternative language or format (such as Braille, audiotape or large print), please ask the staff who are looking after you.

Specialist Continence Service

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