

GOOD BLADDER TIPS

You may notice that your bladder control is not as good as it used to be. There can be many different reasons for this, but don't worry...there are solutions.

As a first step, it is very important to make sure your bladder is emptying properly. A bladder scan can determine if there is any urine left in the bladder after you void (pee). The nurse in the Urology Resource Centre or our doctor can arrange this test for you. If you are not emptying well, you may need to see a urologist to determine why.

It is also important to make sure you do not have a bladder infection. Symptoms of this are urgency, frequency, burning and urine leakage. A simple urine test can show if you have an infection.

If you are emptying your bladder well, and you don't have a bladder infection...great! You are now ready to follow the **Good Bladder Tips** below. ALL MEN AND WOMEN will benefit from these good bladder tips.

If you have trouble with mobility, make it easier to get to the washroom on time

- Use a commode near your bed or your chair. You can buy or rent these.
- Use a raised toilet seat with arms in the bathroom or install a handrail.
- Wear clothes that are easy to get on and off, such as track pants or a skirt
- Wear clothes with Velcro or elastic instead of buttons and zippers
- Always wear shoes or slippers around the house with a non-slip sole.
- Remove loose rugs and bathmats to make a safe path to the bathroom.

Empty your bladder well every time you void

- Be patient. Take the time to empty well.
- Change your position. Lean forward and backward.
- Press on your stomach to produce a double void.

Put your feet up

- Put your feet up on a stool at night when you read or watch TV. This re-circulates the fluid that collects in the legs and feet. This can reduce your trips to the bathroom in the middle of the night.

Drink bladder friendly fluids

- Drink 6 to 8 cups of fluid a day. *This includes water!*
- Eliminate caffeine (coffee, tea, chocolate and cola). Caffeine increases the need and urge to urinate. Decaf coffees and teas are fine in moderation.
- Citrus juices and fruits, such as orange, grapefruit, pineapple, lemon and lime can irritate the bladder. Try apple, grape or cranberry juice instead.
- Reduce your intake of alcohol, artificial sweeteners, carbonated beverages and spicy foods.

NOTE: Cutting back on your fluids does not make you void less. It makes the urine strong and irritates the bladder.

Strengthen the pelvic floor

- Pelvic muscles hold the bladder, uterus and bowel in place and help support the bladder "neck".
However, these muscles can become weak or damaged by childbirth, surgery, trauma (shock), a lack of estrogen or changes as you age.
- Pelvic floor exercises can help patients who struggle with urinary incontinence.

How to do a pelvic muscle exercise correctly:

- Tighten your rectum as if you were trying to stop passing gas in a crowded elevator. Hold that squeeze for 3 seconds.

- Relax for 3 seconds and do it again.
- Do 10 of these squeezes 5 times a day. Do not do more or you will overtire the muscles.
- You can do these muscles when you sit, lie down or stand.
- Do these exercises until you can control your bladder. Many people do these for life.

Some people have trouble isolating the right muscle or visualizing what is going on in their body. The nurse in the Urology Resource Centre can help you do the exercises correctly and monitor your progress using Biofeedback (equipment that lets you see if you are isolating the right muscle and how strong the contractions are).

Train your bladder to void regularly but not too frequently

- You want to void every 2 to 3 hours. Practice retraining your bladder to gradually increase the time between voids until you achieve this.
- In the first week, try to wait for 10 minutes when you have the urge to go.
- The next week, wait 15 minutes before you void.
- Use the pelvic muscle exercises to help. (see above)
- If you forget to go every 2 to 3 hours, try setting an alarm to remind you to void regularly. It's important!

Assess your medications

- There are several drugs to help control bladder problems. Talk to your doctor about these.
- Some medications can have a negative effect on the bladder. Anti-depressants and sleeping pills can make you less aware of your urge to void and prevent the bladder from emptying properly. Diuretics, prescribed to reduce fluid retention, can cause frequency and urgency.
- Talk to your pharmacist about the possible side effects of your medications.

Hygiene and Continence Products

- Keep clean to avoid rashes and infections.
- Use mild soaps, such as Dove, and avoid deodorant soaps. There are also protective creams and washes for continence care.
- Use an appropriate pad for the amount of leakage you have. Make sure it is a pad designed for urine. Some of the common brands are Depends, Tena, Attends, Poise and pharmacy brand names.
- Most pharmacies have a professional on staff who can help you choose the right product. The *Urology Resource Centre* also has a display of different products.

(Written jointly by the Urology Resource Centre and Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital)