



The Canadian
Continenence
Foundation

Continenence Facts

Training Your Bladder to Help Prevent and Correct Bladder Control Problems

It may be possible to successfully train your bladder. This information sheet is intended to provide you with some tips. It is NOT intended to replace a visit with an interested and knowledgeable nurse, physiotherapist or physician. He or she can help you decide if bladder training is right for you.

What is Bladder Training?

The bladder can be trained. Training will increase the time between bathroom visits, and help you control the urge to urinate. This may allow you to worry less often about the "closest bathroom". It may also reduce the number of accidents you have when you cannot get to the bathroom on time.

The techniques to train the bladder are:

- Putting yourself on a regular bathroom schedule, and gradually increasing the time between bathroom visits.
- Trying to hold off even when you feel the urge to GO.

Why might the bladder need "training"?

The brain sends a message to the bladder when it is time to empty. This is called the "bladder-brain" connection. Some people run to the bathroom at the first urge to urinate, or whenever a bathroom is in sight. This can actually interfere with the normal "bladder-brain" connection, by training the bladder to want to empty too often. In fact, your bladder is a muscle and, like any other muscle, it needs exercise to stay in shape and to hold as much urine as it should. Filling and contracting is exercise for the bladder! Going to the bathroom too often may not allow the bladder to completely fill. Therefore, it may not be getting its exercise.

Normally, a person who drinks 5 to 8 cups of liquid per day can wait at least 2 hours between bathroom visits. If you:

- empty your bladder more than every 2 hours during the day;
- get up to urinate more than once or twice during the night; and/or
- cannot delay an urge to urinate for at least 30 minutes,

then your bladder may need "training".

Who can benefit from bladder training?

Research shows that this type of training can help some individuals who experience:

- **urge incontinence:** feeling a strong urge to urinate and not being able to make it to the bathroom on time.
- **frequency:** the need to go to the bathroom frequently.
- **urgency:** the urgent need to empty your bladder immediately.
- **stress incontinence¹:** urine leakage when coughing, laughing, sneezing, or doing any other activity which may put pressure on the bladder.
- **mixed incontinence:** a combination of urge and stress incontinence.

In order for bladder training to be effective, you must be able to feel the urge to urinate, and should be able to get to a washroom on your own or with assistance.

¹ There is some controversy as to whether or not bladder training is effective for stress incontinence.





TIPS

How can I train my bladder?

Here is an example:

1. Keep a record of how much you drink and how often you empty your bladder (see the bladder emptying record included with this sheet). Measuring the amount of urine you pass is very helpful. Keep a record for 1 to 3 days.
2. Review the record and find your average time between bathroom visits.
3. Start scheduling your bathroom visits an extra 15 minutes apart. For example, if you were going to the bathroom once every hour on average, then start a schedule of one hour and fifteen minutes.
4. If you get an urge to go to the bathroom before your scheduled visit, do not rush to the bathroom. Stay calm. Sit or stand still; physical activity will only further excite your bladder and cause you to leak.
5. Try to stop the urge to go. The following tips may help:
 - Take a deep breath. Relax. Breathe slowly.
 - If you have worked with your healthcare professional to learn Pelvic Muscle Exercises (Kegels), then contract your muscle and hold it for 10 seconds (you may contact The Canadian Continence Foundation for an instruction sheet on Kegel exercises). Try this a few times.
 - Count backwards from one hundred or distract yourself in some other way that works for you.
6. Once the urge is gone, wait until your next scheduled bathroom visit. If the urge returns before then, repeat steps 4 and 5.
7. When you are able to maintain the schedule without accidents in between, increase the schedule by another 15 minutes. (You may be able to increase the schedule by 30 minutes instead of 15. A timer may help to remind you to keep your schedule).
8. Keep working at the above until you can last for a period of time between bathroom visits which is convenient for you.

- *Along the way, don't worry if you have to go to the bathroom occasionally before the set time. Keep at it! Improvement may take several months.*
- *These are just guidelines. Everybody is unique, and different people may find their own "tricks" which work for them.*
- *Drink 5 to 8 cups of fluid per day. Avoid tea, coffee, chocolate, colas and alcohol. These can irritate the bladder and cause the urge to empty your bladder.*
- *Bring your completed bladder record when you meet with your healthcare professional. It will help both you and your healthcare professional determine your best treatment plan.*
- *Your treatment plan may also include medications and/or physiotherapy.*
- *If you are unable to find the appropriate healthcare professional, contact The Canadian Continence Foundation at 1-800-265-9575, for a list of specialists in your local area.*
- *Other factors may cause bladder problems. Before starting your own treatment program, always discuss your concerns with your healthcare professional. Whatever the case may be, bladder control problems can usually be successfully cured, treated or managed. Don't give up!*

References: Managing Acute and Chronic Urinary Incontinence; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Agency for Health Care Policy and Research, Number 2, 1996 Update. Let's Talk about Bladder Control for Woman, National Kidney and Urological Diseases Information Clearinghouse, The National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases of the National Institute of Health, U.S. Public Health Service.

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For more information on bladder control, contact

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BLADDER EMPTYING RECORD

DAY 1

DAY 2

TIME	AMOUNT URINATED		DID YOU FEEL A STRONG URGE TO GO?		LEAKAGE		DRINKS		AMOUNT URINATED		DID YOU FEEL A STRONG URGE TO GO?		LEAKAGE		DRINKS	
	HOW MANY TIMES?	HOW MUCH?	YES	NO	HOW MANY TIMES?	HOW MUCH?	WHICH DRINKS?	HOW MUCH?	HOW MANY TIMES?	HOW MUCH?	YES	NO	HOW MANY TIMES?	HOW MUCH?	WHICH DRINKS?	HOW MUCH?
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NAME :

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