

## BLADDER RETRAINING

### Urination: The Basics

Urine is made by the kidneys and flows into the bladder where it is stored. A muscle band around the base of the bladder (the sphincter) helps keep urine in the bladder during filling. As the bladder fills, a message goes to the brain that it is time to urinate. The brain then sends a message down to the sphincter muscle that it is a good time to urinate.

### Sounds Easy?

The body's way of controlling the bladder and sphincter muscle is actually very complex. Controlling the bladder and sphincter muscle may get more difficult as we get older. Changes occur to the bladder muscle with age and cause it to become irritable when it is filled with urine. These changes may cause us to have a feeling of **"urgency"** (running to the bathroom) or **"frequency"** (having to urinate all the time). In some cases, many people with urgency cannot make it to the toilet in time and leak urine (**"urge incontinence"**). In addition, the sphincter muscle may weaken with age, causing other people to leak urine when they cough, laugh, sneeze, or are active. This is called **"stress incontinence"**. Finally, as we age our kidneys make more urine at night, causing us to have to go to the bathroom at night (**"Nocturia"**). In some cases, this occurs very frequently and disrupts our ability to get a good night of sleep.

In many cases, people may have multiple or all of these problems. This makes treatment more difficult. But, there are now many **ways to help!!** While there are medicines and surgeries that can help, the first step is bladder retraining.

### What is bladder retraining?

Bladder retraining is a program to change the way you urinate that can help decrease the problems of urgency, frequency, and incontinence. While it isn't the answer in everyone, studies have shown that it can help many people. One study showed that bladder retraining resulted in 75% of patients seeing an improvement in their symptoms, with 12% being completely cured. These are very encouraging results as bladder retraining does not require people to take any medicines or undergo any surgeries.

### The bladder diary

A bladder diary is just that: a diary to record various things about your bladder function. For example, how often you urinate, how much you urinate, and when you leak urine. This is very important to help your doctor treat your bladder symptoms. Unlike other disorders where a blood test or XRAY can be done to monitor the problem, with bladder control problems the **best way to monitor progress is to record your symptoms**. This is what a bladder diary does!

**Bladder Diary Instructions (You will need a timer or a clock):**

**Bladder Diary** (please refer to page 5 of this handout for the “Bladder Diary”)

1. Every time you urinate, place an “X” in the white column
2. Every time you leak urine, place an “X” in the gray column. Next to this, place a “D” if your pad is damp or a “W” if the pad is completely wet.
3. Keep track of how many pads you go through in a day and mark that at the bottom of each daily column in the space called “Pads”.

**Nocturia Diary** (only if your doctor has given you a second sheet called “Nocturia Diary”)

1. Use the urinal to record the volume of urine each time you urinate. Record this next to the time you urinated in the column called “amount voided”.
2. Use the other columns to record how much fluid you drink and what type of fluid you drink. Again, put these numbers next to the time you drank the fluids.

**BLADDER RETRAINING: A SIX-WEEK PROGRAM TO RETRAIN YOUR BLADDER****WEEK ONE:**

Urinate when you first get up in the morning. If you have had a hard time making it to the toilet when you get up, squeeze the muscle that holds back your urine before you get out of bed and count slowly to **FIVE**. Then get out of bed and walk slowly to the toilet.

Empty your bladder as completely as you can and put an “X” in the white column beside the hour you used the toilet. Now set your timer for **one hour**.

When the timer sounds, go to the toilet, even if you do not feel the need to empty your bladder. This is called “**Timed Voiding**”. Put an “X” in the white column when you urinate. Set the timer again for one hour and urinate again when the timer sounds. Continue this all day until bedtime. If you leak urine at any time, place an “X” in the gray column.

Just prior to bed, go to the bathroom. When finished, stand away from the toilet and then try to go again within the next five minutes. This may help you to further empty your bladder before bed and is called “**double voiding**”. You do not have to wake up in the night. However, if you do, please document this on the diary.

## LEARNING TO CONTROL THE URGE

When you feel the urge to urinate before the timer sounds, try to distract yourself:

1. Think about a very complex task (balancing the checkbook, listing the birthdays of ten family members, listing the words to your favorite hymn, etc).
2. Think about something especially happy or fun (watching a sunset, your last vacation, etc).
3. You may also try:
  - a. Rolling up a bath towel and placing it on a firm chair. Sit on this roll when you have a strong urge to urinate.
  - b. Place a rolled towel between your legs and push it up against your body with your hand.

The feeling that you need to go should pass and you should be able to wait until the timer sounds. If you cannot wait, go ahead and go to the bathroom. Continue to make an "X" in the diary.

When you are able to urinate every hour without leakage and able to control the urge, you have made progress! Continue to week two.

### WEEK TWO:

Urinate when you first get up in the morning. If you have had a hard time making it to the toilet when you get up, squeeze the muscle that holds back your urine before you get out of bed and count slowly to **TEN**. Then get out of bed and walk slowly to the toilet.

Empty your bladder as completely as you can and put an "X" in the white column beside the hour you used the toilet. Now set your timer for **1 ½ hour**. **Continue "Timed Voiding"** as you did in week one, but with the timer now set for every 1 ½ hour. **Continue "Double Voiding"** prior to bedtime. **Continue marking all urination times and leakage times** with an "X" as you did in week one.

When you are able to urinate every 1 ½ hours without leakage and able to control the urge, you have made more progress! Continue on to weeks three through six.

### WEEKS THREE THROUGH SIX:

In *WEEKS THREE THROUGH SIX*, you will increase the time between urination to:

Week Three: 1 hour 45 minutes

Week Four: 2 hours

Week Five: 2 hours 30 minutes

Week Six: 3 or 3 ½ hours

Continue marking in your diary at least one or two days each week.

## TIPS FOR SUCCESS

1. Believe that you will be successful!
2. Give bladder training a full 6-8 weeks to help and do not be discouraged if you have breaks in your progress. Your bladder problems did not happen overnight and they will not be cured overnight.
3. Setbacks happen! Especially when you are tired, stressed, or sick. On cold or rainy days. When you are about to start your menstrual period.
4. Watch your diet and fluids for things that make your bladder worse. These may be different in different people. In general, alcoholic beverages and caffeine (coffee, tea, soda) tend to make bladder control worse. Plain water is generally best.
5. Drink normal amounts of fluid each day. Six to eight glasses of water are, in general, plenty of fluids for a normal person.
6. Try to avoid drinking fluids at night (after 5 or 6 pm). Especially if you are bothered by urination at night, this may make things worse.
7. Establish regular bowel habits. Your bladder and bowel function is often related, so if your bowels are irregular then your bladder function may be worse. If you are constipated, add fiber to your diet. You may also need to talk about this with your doctor.
8. Avoid going to the toilet "just in case". This may lead to a bad habit and frequent urination.

## Bladder Diary

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
6am							
7am							
8am							
9am							
10am							
11am							
Noon							
1pm							
2pm							
3pm							
4pm							
5pm							
6pm							
7pm							
8pm							
9pm							
10pm							
11pm							
Midnight							
1am							
2am							
3am							
4am							
5am							
PADS							