

Bladder Calming Techniques

Bladder training is a self-help program which you can use to reduce the following symptoms of:

- Frequency - passing urine more than seven times a day (after drinking two litres of water with minimal coffee)
- Nocturia - passing urine more than once at night or twice as you get older
- Urgency - not being able to hold on
- Urge incontinence - leaking urine when you feel the urge to go

The aim is to train your bladder so you are more comfortable when it is filling up and allows you to go longer before you need to empty it again.

The following tactics are useful for bladder calming and bladder training and are done over two stages. These are physical tactics which help to reduce bladder discomfort and act to relax the bladder, making it easier to hold on

Pelvic floor and tummy hollowing contractions

Contract your deep abdominal muscles by gently drawing in your lower tummy from below your belly button - as if you were doing up a tight skirt or pair of pants. At the same time, squeeze and lift your pelvic floor until the sensation of urgency goes away. Do not hold your breath.

Combining contractions of the pelvic floor muscles and lower abdominal muscles helps your bladder to relax. Try and develop the habit of doing this automatically to prevent urine leakage when you have an urgent desire to empty your bladder. A strong muscle contraction reduces the urgent messages that your bladder is sending you. You should do this each time you feel that the sensation from your bladder is inappropriate.

Try the following tactics when you feel an urgent need to pass urine:

Clitoral pressure

By putting a firm finger/hand pressure over the clitoris, the sensation of 'needing to go' can be stopped.

Perineal pressure

By applying pressure to the perineum, the area between the vagina and the anus, you can suppress bladder sensation. Small children do this by crossing their legs and holding onto themselves. You could do this by crossing your legs or sitting on the edge of a chair, the corner of a desk or your heel.

Toe curling

This can be done anywhere, anytime. Curl your toes downwards as if you were making a fist. Hold this position for as long as the bladder is feeling urgent. Be careful if you tend to cramp - try alternating one foot then the other. Flexing your toes underneath, one foot at a time is just as effective.

Calf stretches

This exercise can be done while sitting, standing or lying so it is suitable for most situations. By keeping your knee straight and pulling your foot towards you, you should feel the muscles at the back of your calf being stretched. Hold this stretch until the need to go passes.

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Sacral tapping

Tap, rub or press over the sacrum - the solid triangular bone at the base of your spine. Keep this pressure up until the need to go passes.

Trigger points

Top lip pressure

Place one finger at the join of your nose and top lip and push gently in. Hold this until the bladder relaxes.

Ankle pressure

Place three fingers above the ankle bone on the outside of the leg. Hold this until the bladder relaxes.

Suprapubic pressure

Place four fingers at a point halfway between your pubic bone and belly button and press into your tummy firmly. Hold this pressure until the bladder relaxes.

Controlled walking

Don't run to the toilet - it will stimulate and upset your bladder further. Walk slowly, concentrating on the sensation coming from your feet and combine it with relaxed breathing.

These tactics are much more successful if you start them at the first sign of bladder irritability, not when you are 'desperate'. When you know that you are approaching a situation that is a typical trigger for your bladder, use these tactics before the bladder urgency is noticeable.

Typical triggers tend to be:

- On the way to the toilet
- With running water - taps, showers, hose pipes, laundry
- Going into a cold environment
- Getting up from lying down or sitting down for a long period
- With anxiety.
- When you arrive home after being out.

When you have tried all of the bladder calming techniques, use the ones which work best for you and combine them with your bladder training program to take back control of your bladder.

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Reviewed July 2012

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