



Women's Health and Lymphedema Services

Original!

BLADDER HEALTH

WHAT IS CONSIDERED NORMAL?

The average bladder can hold about 2 cups of urine before it needs to be emptied. It is normal to pass urine 5 to 7 times during a 24-hour period. As we get older, our bladder capacity can get smaller and we may need to pass urine more frequently. It is normal for an older adult to pass urine up to 8 times a day and to rise one time per night to void. Urine should flow easily without discomfort in a good, steady stream until the bladder is empty. No pushing or straining to empty your bladder should be necessary. An urge is a signal that you feel as the bladder stretches to fill with urine. Urges can be felt even if the bladder is not full. Urges are not commands to go to the toilet, merely reminders and may be controlled.

WHAT ARE GOOD BLADDER HABITS?

Practice good toilet habits. Don't let your bladder control your life.

- Take your time when emptying your bladder. Don't strain or push to empty your bladder. Make sure you empty your bladder completely each time you pass urine. Do not rush the process.
- Ignoring the urge for more than 4-5 hours between daytime voids may be convenient but not healthy for your bladder.
- Avoid going to the toilet "just in case" or more often than every 2 hours. It is usually not necessary to go when you feel the first urge. Try to go only when your bladder is full. Urgency and frequency of urination can be improved by retraining the bladder and spacing your fluid intake throughout the day.

TIPS TO MAINTAIN GOOD BLADDER HABITS

- Maintain a good fluid intake and diet. Try to drink 4-8 glasses of fluid per day (6 cups or more) unless otherwise advised by your doctor.
- Limit the amount of caffeine (coffee, cola, chocolate or tea) and citrus foods that you consume as these foods can be associated with increased sensation of urinary urgency and frequency. Refer to How Diet May Affect Your Bladder handout.
- Limit the amount of alcohol you drink as it increases urine production and also makes it difficult for the brain to coordinate bladder control.
- Avoid constipation and ask for tips on how to care for the problem if it does affect you.



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HOW DIET MAY AFFECT YOUR BLADDER

Although there is no particular "diet" that can cure bladder control there are certain dietary suggestions you can use to help control the problem. Many people with bladder control problems decrease their intake of liquids in hope that they will need to urinate less frequently or have less urinary leakage. While a decrease in liquid intake does result in a decrease in the volume of urine, the smaller amount of urine may be more highly concentrated. Highly concentrated, dark yellow urine is irritating to the bladder surface and may actually cause you to go to the bathroom more frequently. It also encourages the growth of bacteria, which may lead to infections resulting in incontinence. You should not restrict fluids to control your bladder without the advice of your physician.

Some foods and beverages are thought to contribute to bladder leakage. Their effect on the bladder is not always understood however, you may want to see if eliminating one or all of these items improves your bladder control. If you are unable to give them up completely, it is recommended that you use the following items in moderation:

alcoholic beverages
highly spiced foods
artificial sweeteners

tomato based products
caffeinated beverages
citrus and fruit juice

Substitutions:

Low acid fruits: pears, apricots, papaya, watennelon

For coffee drinkers: KAVA (low acid instant)
Postum
Pero

For tea drinkers: Non-citrus herbal
Sun brewed tea

Vitamin C substitute: Calcium carbonate co-buffered with calcium ascorbate

Although water is always the best beverage choice, grape and apple juice are thirst quenchers and are not as irritating to the bladder. Cigarette smoking is also irritating to the bladder surface and is associated with bladder cancer. In addition, the coughing associated with smoking may lead to increased stress incontinence episodes. Obesity can also contribute to incontinence.



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KEEPING A RECORD OF YOUR BLADDER FUNCTION

HOW TO KEEP YOUR BLADDER DIARY

The main purpose of a bladder diary is to document how your bladder functions. A diary can give your health care provider an excellent picture of your bladder functions, habits and patterns. The diary is first used as an evaluation tool. Later, it is used to measure your progress. Please complete a bladder diary every day for _____ days and bring it with you to your first appointment.

In the beginning, continue to go about your daily life as normal. You are making a written record of your normal bladder patterns so please avoid making any changes in your bladder routines. Your diary will be much more accurate if you fill it out as you go through the day. It can be very difficult to remember at the end of the day exactly what happened in the morning. The diary plays an important part in your health care provider's ability to understand your problem and should not be taken lightly.

Also, if possible, remember to change your pad or clothing whenever you feel yourself leaking or notice that you are damp. A dry pad or pair of underwear will increase your awareness of problems and improve the accuracy of your record.

INSTRUCTIONS

Column 1 – Type & Amount of Fluid Intake:

Record the type and amount of fluid you drank.

Note the hour you went to sleep and when you woke up for the day.

Column 2 – Amount Voided (Urinated):

Place the measured amount of urine in the box with the appropriate time interval each time you urinate during the day. You **DO** need to fill in ounces unless specifically instructed by your health care provider.

Column 3 – Amount of Leakage:

SMALL = drop or two of urine

MEDIUM = wet underwear

LARGE = wet outerwear or floor

Column 4 – Activity causing Leakage. Was Urge Present?

Describe the activity associated with the leakage i.e. coughed, heard running water, sneezed bent over, lifted something or had a strong urge. Also, describe any urge sensation you had as:

MILD = first sensation of need to go

MODERATE = stronger sensation or need.

STRONG = need to get to toilet, move aside!



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DAILY VOIDING DIARY

NAME _____ DATE _____

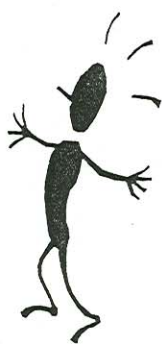
Time of Day	Type & Amount of Fluid Intake (in ounces)	Amount Voided (in ounces) 1 second = 1 oz.	Amt of Leakage SM/MD/LG	Activity w/ Leakage. Was urge present?
12:00a				
1:00				
2:00				
3:00				
4:00				
5:00				
6:00				
7:00				
8:00				
9:00				
10:00				
11:00				
12:00p				
1:00				
2:00				
3:00				
4:00				
5:00				
6:00				
7:00				
8:00				
9:00				
10:00				
11:00				

Comments _____ Number of pads used _____

INSTRUCTIONS FOR CONTROLLING URINARY URGE

WHEN YOU EXPERIENCE AN URGE TO URINATE:

- FIRST** Stop and stand very still. Sit down if you can or stand quietly. Do not move; try to stay very still to maintain control.
- SECOND** Quickly squeeze and let go of your pelvic floor muscles 5 to 6 times to keep from leaking. Use moderate to maximal effort for the exercise. This sends a message to the bladder to relax and hold urine. Try to distract yourself by thinking of something other than going to the bathroom.
- THIRD** Relax. Take a deep belly or diaphragmatic breath and let it out slowly. Try to make the urge to urinate go away by continuing with distraction techniques and positive thoughts.
- FINALLY** If the urge returns, repeat the above steps to regain control. When you feel the urge subside somewhat, walk **normally** to the bathroom. **Do not rush.** Continue to do your quick flicks to relax the bladder. You can urinate once the urge has subsided.



Urge Feeling!



Stop and be still.
Begin pelvic floor
contractions.



Do not rush to
the toilet.



Think positively.
Distract yourself.



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PERFORMING PELVIC FLOOR EXERCISES

Pelvic floor exercise, is also called pelvic muscle or Kegel exercise. Through regular exercise of these muscles you can build awareness, muscle strength, endurance and coordination.

STARTING PELVIC FLOOR EXERCISES:

- **Relax your body and breathe during your exercises.** Holding your breath makes it more difficult to exercise correctly. **Do not strain, bear down or hold your breath as you do the exercises.**
- **Isolate the muscles.** You should not see or feel other muscle movement when performing pelvic floor exercises. If done properly, no one else can tell if you are doing the exercise. Keep the buttocks, belly and inner thighs relaxed

PERFORMING THE EXERCISE

- Place your hand on top of your pubic bone.
- Tighten, and draw in the muscles around the anal and the vaginal openings so that you feel the muscles lift towards your pubic bone and squeeze the openings shut.

POSITION FOR THE EXERCISES

- Start lying down with your knees bent and supported with pillows
- Once you've gained awareness and can feel the contractions you may perform the exercises in sitting or standing

TYPES OF EXERCISES

There are two types of exercise contractions you should perform:

1. Quick contractions where you tighten, lift and release.
2. Endurance contractions where you tighten, lift and hold the muscles for up to 10 seconds.

EXERCISE FREQUENCY

- In general you should perform a total of 30 - 80 of these exercises per day.
- Talk to your health care provider about a specific exercise program.



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YOUR HOME TREATMENT PROGRAM PELVIC FLOOR EXERCISES

PELVIC FLOOR EXERCISES

Your muscle strength, endurance and control will improve if you challenge your muscles to do more than they are used to doing. You should try to tighten the muscles strongly during each contraction. Each contraction should feel the same as the repetition before. The quality of the exercise is more important than the number that you perform. If you feel the quality of your exercise decline, for example starting to strain, bear down or using other muscles, stop your exercises and take a break.

To begin, get yourself comfortable in a _____ position. Avoid straining or holding your breath, or using other muscles while you exercise. Do each of the exercises _____ times per day.

QUICK CONTRACTIONS

This should be a very quick contraction and relaxation of your pelvic floor muscles. Begin with a belly breath, exhale, then contract your pelvic floor muscles and hold for _____ seconds. Relax for _____ seconds and repeat this exercise _____ times. Remember, never hold your breath.

ENDURANCE CONTRACTIONS

This should be a longer contraction and relaxation. Pull your pelvic floor muscles up and in for _____ seconds then relax for _____ seconds. Repeat this _____ times. Again, it is important that you do not hold your breath during these exercises. It may help to count out loud to make sure that you are breathing throughout your exercises.

ASSESSING YOUR PROGRESS

It is important to keep your regularly scheduled therapy appointment. At those visits we can advance your exercise routine and teach you how to use your muscles with activities that cause leakage. Please avoid practicing your pelvic floor exercises for at least 2 hours before your next appointment. If your muscles are fatigued they will not function as well as they can. **Bring your exercise sheets and urination diaries to each office visit.**

SCHEDULE AND RECORDS

You will be asked to complete a urination diary at various times throughout your treatment program. It is important that you accurately record everything that happens so your therapist can evaluate your progress and update your treatment plan as you improve. This week please record _____.

To establish good bladder control you should be urinating every _____ hours. Practice suppressing the urge to go in between scheduled urination times by using the techniques you have learned.