

Bladder retraining

You may have symptoms of going frequently and urgently to the toilet. Sometimes you may not always make it, leaking on the way.

This may be a result of:

- drinking too much caffeine (coffee, tea, coke, and so on)
- learned responses, such as hearing running water, key in the door, going just in case
- changing position or movement.



In some cases medication that calms your bladder may help to control these symptoms, but you may not need it if you practise the following steps.

Steps to control your bladder

It is useful to complete a bladder diary to see how often you go to the toilet and how much you drink.

You can expect to go to the toilet between six and nine times in a 24-hour period if you are drinking enough.

Fluids

- A healthy amount to drink in a day is six to eight cups (1.5 to 2 L). This includes all your drinks.
- Avoid too much caffeine, limit caffeinated drinks to two to three cups per day.
- Aim to have at least four glasses of water per day.
- Space your drinks throughout the day.
- Avoid drinking too much before bedtime.

Steps to control your urgency

When you feel a sudden strong urge to pass urine:

- sit down if possible (sitting on the edge of a seat can be helpful)
- relax your shoulders
- relax your stomach and breathe calmly
- avoid becoming tense or panicky (this will only increase the urge to pass urine)
- remain calm and wait until the urgency feeling decreases (it may take a few minutes)
- you may find gently tightening your pelvic floor muscles will help but make sure you remain relaxed and calm
- some mental distractions may help, for example counting backwards or in multiples, reading or talking.

When the urgency feeling goes, either continue what you were doing or walk calmly and slowly to the toilet.

Practise these steps every time you feel a sudden urge to pass urine.

If, after three months, these steps are not helping, go to see your health professional.

Strengthening your pelvic floor muscles also helps control symptoms of urgency. See Pelvic floor exercises for women or Pelvic floor exercises for men on HealthInfo.

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