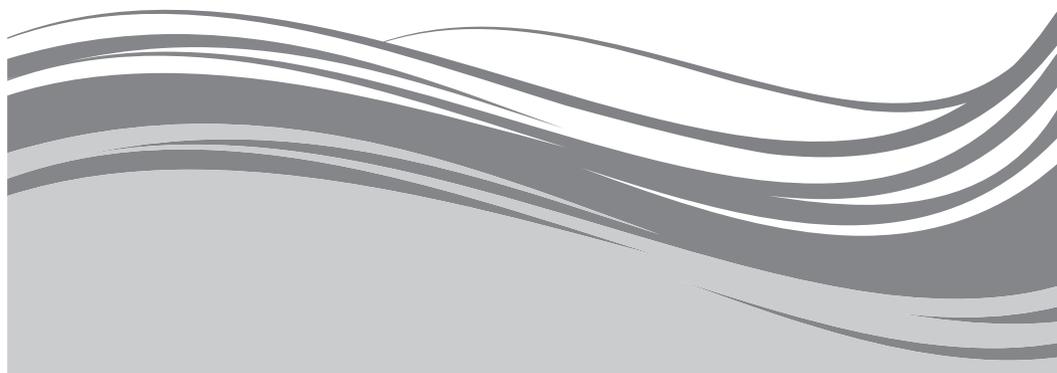


Information about

How to help an overactive bladder

This booklet will help you understand how your bladder works. Following this advice can help your bladder work better.



Normal bladder function

Your bladder collects and stores urine until it is full and needs to be emptied. The feeling of needing to go to the toilet increases as the bladder fills, but you should be able to delay emptying your bladder until you reach a suitable time and place.

Most people need to empty the bladder between 6 and 7 times a day and for some, once overnight. A normal bladder can usually hold around 400ml - 600ml, with the largest amount being passed first thing in the morning on rising.

Many people experience some leakage with a sneeze or cough. This is called stress incontinence.

Some people have symptoms of an 'overactive bladder'. These are described below:

Symptoms of an overactive bladder

Daytime Frequency is when you pass urine very often (more than 8 times a day).

Urgency is when you have a sudden strong desire to pass urine and cannot delay the need to go.

Urge urinary incontinence is when you have a strong desire to pass urine, and start to leak before getting to the toilet.

Urgency and, or incontinence can be triggered by many things e.g. the sound of running water, putting the key in the door on arriving home, a cold atmosphere or simply by going into the bathroom.

Nocturia is when you waken during the night to pass urine.

Healthy drinking habits

The following information suggests ways you can help yourself to achieve a more normal bladder function.

We recommend that you drink around 3 to 4 pints (1.5 litres - 2 litres) of liquid per day.

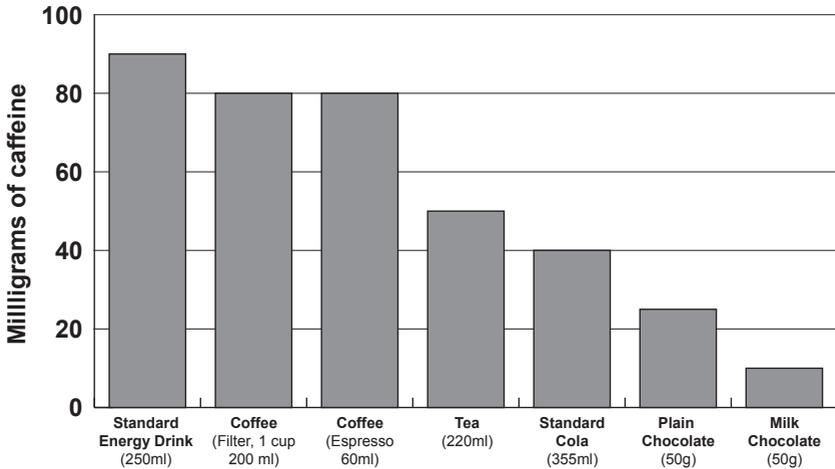
Drinking less than this could make your symptoms worse because the urine could become more concentrated and irritate your bladder.

Some food and drinks may increase your bladder symptoms such as fizzy drinks, alcohol and products containing caffeine. Reducing these might improve your bladder symptoms.

Reduce your caffeine intake slowly to avoid any unpleasant withdrawal effects e.g. headache and tiredness.

The chart below tells you more about how different drinks can have varying amounts of caffeine.
(From Food Standards Agency, 2019)

Caffeine content in food and drinks



You can maintain healthy drinking habits by replacing caffeine and fizzy drinks with the following liquids:

- Water
- Milk
- Decaffeinated tea or coffee
- Diluting juices

Bladder Retraining

Many people become trapped in a vicious circle of emptying their bladder more and more often in an attempt to stay dry. They might get into the habit of going 'just in case' instead of waiting until the bladder is full. The bladder then gets used to holding only a small amount of urine and symptoms can get worse.

Bladder retraining works by gently stretching the bladder muscle so that it stays more relaxed as the bladder fills. The bladder should become less sensitive and less irritable. The aim is to hold on for longer intervals before going to the toilet.

This will seem difficult at first but should become easier as the bladder becomes used to holding larger amounts of urine.

Eventually you won't have to go to the toilet so often or in such a rush.

Bladder Retraining - what to do

When you get the urge to pass urine you must try to 'hold on'. Here are some tips to help:

- Keep calm – don't panic.
- Stand still or sit down on a firm surface.
- Put pressure on your pelvic floor (with your hands, sit on a rolled up towel or cross your legs).
- Tighten your pelvic floor muscles.
- Distract your mind, for example recite the alphabet backwards or say the 9 times table.
- The urge will reduce. This can take up to 20 seconds.

Gradually increase the time between visits to the toilet. Eventually you should aim to pass urine 6 or 7 times per day (around every 3 hours). You will also pass a larger volume of urine when you do go.

**Bladder retraining takes time and effort.
Be patient.**

Further information

For more information about incontinence and bladder retraining visit:

www.bladderandbowelfoundation.org

www.patient.info

www.nhsinform.scot

Review Date October 2022



mi • 243824 v2.0