

A Simple Approach to Bladder Training

Follow these guidelines to control the urge to go

By Helen Carcio, MS, MEd, ANP-BC

BLADDER TRAINING can break the habit of frequent voiding, and it can decrease urinary urgency.

Bladder training is an important form of behavioral therapy that can be effective in treating urinary incontinence.

The goals of bladder training are to increase the amount of time between emptying the bladder and the amount of fluids the bladder can hold.

Bladder training also can diminish leakage and the sense of urgency associated with the problem.

The rationale is to regain cortical control over the detrusor muscle of the bladder. In a way, it is similar to toilet training a young child, who must be taught to void on demand.

Voiding on demand allows a woman to regain voluntary control of the bladder, rather than it controlling her.

Toileting Schedule

A toileting schedule works best when adjusted to and based on each woman's individual pattern.

The patient should complete a voiding diary. Voiding should be based on the smallest time interval between voids or every 2 hours.

The woman should void by the clock rather than when she has the urge. If a woman feels an urge to urinate before the assigned interval, she should use urge suppression

As success is achieved, the interval is lengthened in 15- to 30-minute increments until it is possible to remain comfortable for 3 or 4 hours.

This goal can be individualized to suit each woman's needs and desires.



Steps in Bladder Training

- Empty your bladder as soon as you get up in the morning. This act starts your retraining schedule.
- Go to the bathroom at the specific times you and your healthcare provider have discussed. Wait until your next scheduled time to urinate again. Be sure to empty your bladder even if you feel no urge to urinate. Follow the schedule during waking hours only. At night, go to the bathroom only if you awaken and find it necessary.
- When you feel the urge to urinate before the next designated time, use urge suppression techniques or try relaxation techniques like deep breathing. Focus on relaxing all other muscles. If possible, sit down until the sensation passes.

- If the urge is suppressed, adhere to the schedule. If you cannot suppress the urge, wait 5 minutes and then slowly make your way to the bathroom. After urinating, re-establish the schedule. Repeat this process every time you feel an urge.
- Do not be discouraged if you cannot always adhere to the time intervals.
- When you have accomplished your initial goal, gradually increase the time between emptying your bladder by 15-minute intervals. Try to increase your interval each week — however, you will be the best judge of how quickly you can advance to the next step. Increase the time between each urination until you reach a 3- to 4-hour voiding interval.
- It should take between 6 and 12 weeks to accomplish your ultimate goal. Don't be discouraged by setbacks. You may find that you have good days and bad days. As you continue bladder retraining, you will start to experience more good days, so keep practicing. At the end of this training period, voluntary, repetitive efforts to suppress and induce bladder activity may improve cortical voluntary control and thus improve symptoms. ■

Helen Carcio is a nurse practitioner who specializes in the treatment of bladder and bowel health. She owns the Health & Continence Institute in South Deerfield, Mass.

NOTES:

DISCLAIMER: This handout is a general guide only, intended for distribution to patients. If you have specific questions, be sure to discuss them with your healthcare provider. View and print this and other patient handouts on our web site, www.advanceweb.com/NPPAHandouts. ©2015 MERION MATTERS