

BLADDER RETRAINING

The goal of bladder retraining is to return you to a more normal and convenient pattern of urinating. People who experience urinary urgency, frequency, excessive nighttime urinating and urinary leakage can show improvement with this retraining technique. Bladder retraining helps restore your bladder capacity to normal. The program includes education about bladder function, urge control, record keeping, and following a schedule of urinating (voluntarily emptying your bladder). The success of the program depends on your effort to consistently keep a specific schedule and to have follow-up appointments with your health care provider.

THE RETRAINING PROGRAM

- Each morning upon arising, go to the toilet and completely empty your bladder. Your voiding schedule will begin upon getting out of bed and end at bedtime.
- Your voiding schedule is every ____ minutes/hours. Follow this interval as closely as possible. The important part of the retraining is that you practice telling your bladder when to empty and when to hold.
- Go to the toilet at the scheduled time even if you do not feel the need to urinate. The amount you urinate is not important. It is important to relax and not strain while voiding.
- If you feel the need to urinate before the scheduled time, use urge delay techniques.
- If you have to interrupt the schedule, get back on schedule at the assigned time for the next void.

RECORDING ON THE VOIDING LOG

- Record your urination in the voiding log (in the amount voided section) by placing a check corresponding to the time of day.
- If leakage of urine occurs, record the time and amount in “amount of leakage” column with small, medium or large corresponding to the hour this occurs. Do not be discouraged if leakage occurs. Note the next scheduled time for voiding and set a timer to keep on schedule.

PROGRESSING THE PROGRAM

- The goal is to go 3-4 hours between urinating.
- You will change the time between urination by minute/hour intervals.
- Your daily log will help with recording progress and determining the next retraining interval. Be sure to bring the log to all your appointments.

TIPS FOR CONTROLLING THE URGE TO URINATE

- Perform some quick pelvic floor contractions to suppress the urge.
- Mental distraction techniques including visualization of your favorite vacation spot, counting backwards, deep breathing or positive self-thoughts, for example, "I can control my bladder" will help control the urge.
- Pressure to the perineal area helps control the urge. Place your hand or a rolled up towel against the crotch of your underwear and apply firm pressure. Alternatively, sit on a rolled up towel placed on a firm chair.
- Never rush or run to get to the toilet when it's time to go. Always feel "in control" when you stand up to go to the toilet.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

- Avoid foods and beverages that irritate your bladder. See the handout *How Diet May Affect Your Bladder* for a bladder irritant list.
- Drink at least 4-8 glasses of water each day.
- Maintain regular bowel habits. If you are constipated, add fiber to your diet.

DEALING WITH PROBLEMS AND SET BACKS

Setbacks are not uncommon if you have been ill with a cold or flu, are tired, cannot completely concentrate on the program, feel nervous or tense, are sensitive to cold weather or the sound of running water, or are about to start your menstrual period.

If all of the above techniques fail and you still have to an overwhelming urge to go, you may use the toilet. If this occurs, record in the amount urinated column as well as in the "activity with leakage" and "was urge present" columns the hour that this urge and voiding occurred.

The urge feeling needs to be suppressed on a consistent basis; be patient and stick with the program. Before you begin, decide what type of strategy will work for you and use it faithfully.