



West Hertfordshire  
Teaching Hospitals  
NHS Trust



A guide to...

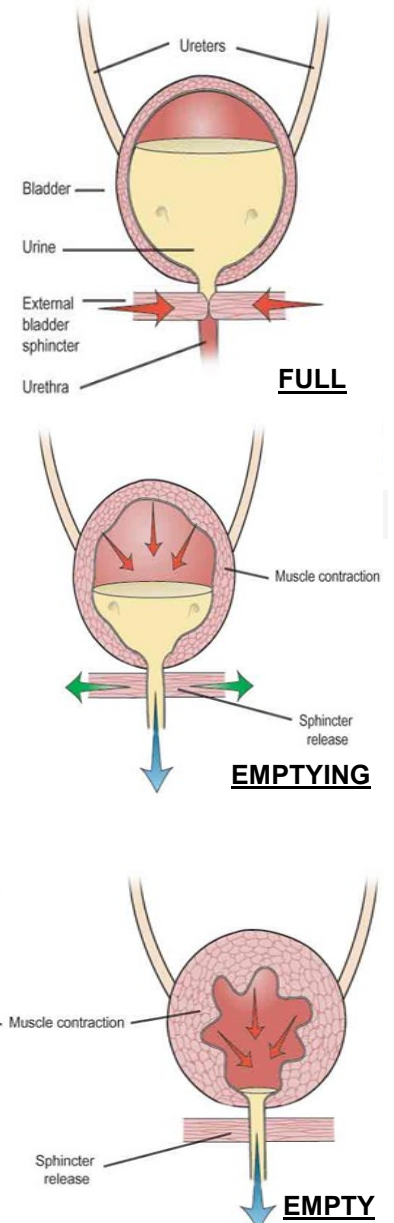
# Bladder Care Advice

## *Patient Information*

Watford General Hospital  
Hemel Hempstead Hospital  
St Albans City Hospital  
West Hertfordshire Therapy Unit

## Normal Bladder Function

Normal bladder function and control is highly complex. How many times you go to the toilet (void) during the day depends on **both** how much you drink **and** how much urine your bladder can store (its' capacity).



## Normal Bladder Function

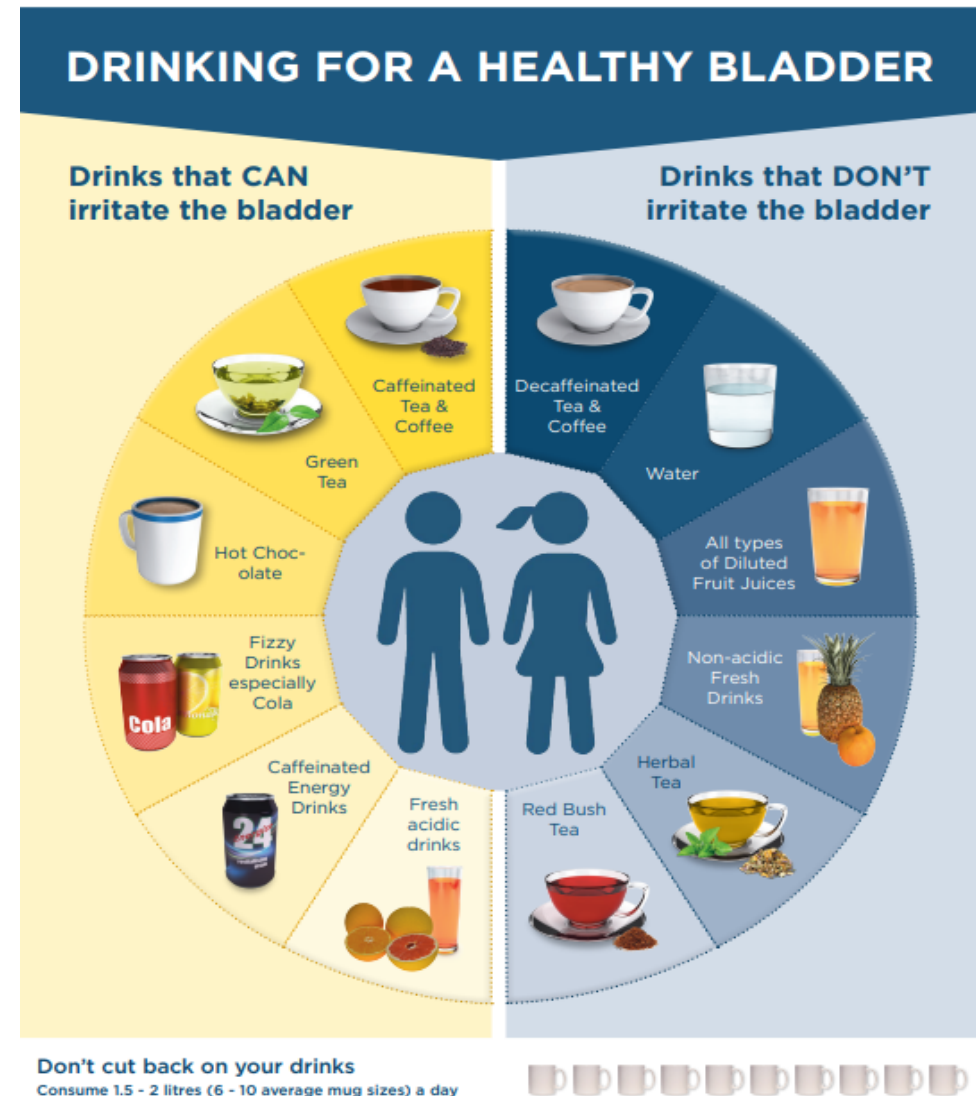
The bladder is a muscular storage bag (detrusor muscle) for urine that is produced from the kidneys. As a baby the bladder empties automatically. In potty training it developed to be under your control, and its' normal capacity increases to around 400-600 ml.

When everything works normally, you are able to delay voiding to go at *the right time and in the right place*, that is, sitting on the toilet.

In **overactive bladder** the detrusor muscles contract at the *wrong time* before you are in the *right place* and this gives you the feeling of urgency, either with or without leakage of urine. As a result you may have developed the (incorrect) habit to empty your bladder before you feel the need to go or '*just in case*' you may need to go (perhaps out of fear of not finding a toilet or embarrassing leakage). This leads to frequent emptying of smaller volumes of urine and may eventually reduce your bladder capacity, as well as sometimes incomplete emptying and even infection.

You may also start to wake at night to empty your bladder too. It is common for the capacity to reduce as you get older and from age 70 it is acceptable to get up once a night, from age 80 twice and age from age 90 three times.

## Bladder Irritants



## Bladder Irritants

When you are not drinking enough, the bladder gets used to holding smaller amounts of urine and can become oversensitive. From the list on the left you can see that certain drinks are more likely to irritate the bladder. These include drinks that contain caffeine and fizzy drinks—especially those labelled ‘diet or lite’ which have artificial sweeteners such as Aspartame or Saccharine.

Alcoholic drinks, particularly spirits, can also irritate the bladder and for some, the acid in various fruit juices can make problems worse. It can often feel like cutting down on fluid intake will help relieve symptoms of Overactive Bladder, but this is not the case. A reduced intake will make your urine more concentrated and it is likely to make your symptoms worse.

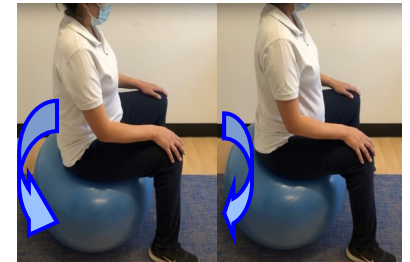
For more information scan or click on this QR code:



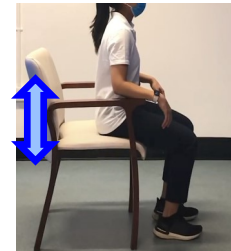
## Bladder Emptying Advice

- Allow for time to empty your bladder— avoid pushing or straining to empty.
- Adopt a good posture while sitting on the toilet to empty.
- Count out loud for up to 10 seconds to allow the bladder to relax to empty.
- **Recommendations to ensure emptied post voiding:**

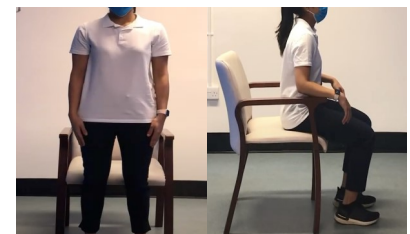
⇒ Pelvic Tilts: tilting your pelvis forwards and backwards to create and remove a small arch in your lower back



⇒ Marching one leg at a time: raise one knee up at a time



⇒ Standing up from toilet and sitting back to toilet



Repeat above a couple of times. If you are dry or there is no further passing of urine then your bladder emptying is finished.

## Explaining Bladder Diaries

If you have been asked to complete a bladder diary please follow the guidance below:

- Complete the bladder diary and fluid chart, as accurately as possible, for at least **three consecutive days**.
- Please commence measuring your urine from your first wee, once you get up to start your day, and each time you pass urine until you go to sleep.
- You also need to measure when you get up to wee at night.
- You commence the next days chart from the first wee of that day and continue in the same way.
- Use a measuring jug or medium size plastic cup to measure your urine output.
- Measure your fluids accurately too.
- Please remember to fill in the comments column when applicable.
- Please let this reflect your normal habits - without changing anything.
- If possible scan and email them back prior to your next appointment and have them next to you at our appointment.

## Bladder Training

Consider the use of these techniques if you're going to the toilet more than 10 times to pass urine. Please ensure you use these techniques alongside your bladder emptying techniques on the previous page. If you're finding it difficult to pass urine please seek further assistance with a healthcare professional.

Instead of rushing to the toilet as soon as you get the urge to pass urine it is important to try learn to 'hold on'. You may tend to go to the toilet more often than you need to as a precaution to avoid 'accidents'. Unfortunately this can increase your symptoms as the bladder will become use to holding less urine.

Bladder training should be carried out in small stages. For example: if you're going to the toilet every half an hour, try extending the time (or holding on) by 10 minutes for a week, then by 15 minutes for a week and then 30 minutes etc.

Ideally you should aim to hold on for three to four hours between toilet visits.

**If you are unsure if this applies to you or it's difficult for you to apply, you may require more specific tailored treatment. Please contact our department to book an appointment.**

## Delayed Void Techniques

Consider the use of these techniques if you're going to the toilet more than 10 times to pass urine. Please ensure you use these techniques alongside your bladder emptying techniques on the previous page. If you're finding it difficult to pass urine please seek further assistance with a healthcare professional.

This technique uses a reflex in the body. It will stop the involuntary contraction of your bladder muscle that is causing your urgency feeling and help you "pass this wave".

- **Stop where you are:** if possible sit down.
- **Relax:** gently and slowly breathe out— think of something different than to going to the toilet.
- **Contract your pelvic floor muscles in the following way:** tighten for four to five seconds, relax and quickly repeat this several times in succession until the "wave of urgency" simply disappears.
- **Stay relaxed:** you can either delay going to empty your bladder in order to allow it to fill up some more thus increasing its capacity, or make your way to the toilet calmly without fear of leakage on the way. If the urgency returns, stop and repeat as above. Do this, even if you are right by the toilet, instead of rushing and fumbling with zips and underwear. Once the wave passes again continue.
- **Distraction:** counting backwards, sing, word search, read etc.
- **Sitting:** on rolled up towel or corner of a surface.
- **Heel raises:** go up and down on your toes in sitting/standing.

## Bowel Care Advice

A "normal" bowel habit involves opening your bowels between three times a day to once every three days, without needing to "push" or "strain". Constipation can be caused by delaying the "urge to go", eating insufficient dietary fibre, drinking too little fluid, inadequate exercise or poor toileting habits.

- Constipation is when your stools become hard and dry, and require "pushing" or "straining" to pass.
- You may also experience bloating, wind and abdominal pain.

It important to avoid constipation as straining to open your bowels will stress and weaken the pelvic floor muscles. Your stool should be soft and easy to pass. These tips may be helpful in preventing constipation.

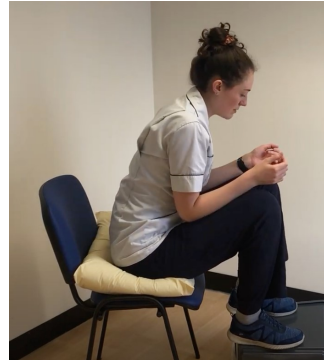
- Drink at least two litres of fluid each day.
- Eat a healthy balanced diet including fibre (fruit, vegetables, beans, wholemeal bread, rice and nuts).
- Empty your bowel as soon as you feel the urge.

Exercise helps stimulate the muscles in the bowel and promote regular bowel habits.

## Bowel Care Advice

**Toilet Position: the optimal toilet position is a seated squat.**

- Use a footstool so your knees are higher than your hips.
- Sit in a leaning forward position with your feet apart and forearms on your thighs.
- With your mouth open relax your tummy. Breathe in deeply to the bottom of your lungs at the same time allowing your tummy muscles to come forwards.
- Breathe out by gently allowing your tummy muscles to fall in and relax your anal sphincter.
- Try this for a maximum of three to four times.



You can watch a video by scanning or clicking on this QR code:



**Bowel Massage: use self-massage to help with bowel emptying.**

Use the small of your hand or a small ball, apply a sweeping motion from the base of the right side of your tummy, up and then across under your ribs, and then down toward the left side at the base of your tummy

You can watch a video by scanning or clicking on this QR code:



## Pelvic Floor Exercise Advice

The pelvic floor muscles are made up of two types of muscle fibres and it is important to exercise both. The “slow” fibres are related to muscle endurance and the “fast” fibres relate to muscle strength (a pulse contraction). Imagine that you are trying to stop yourself “passing wind”, without squeezing your buttocks together.

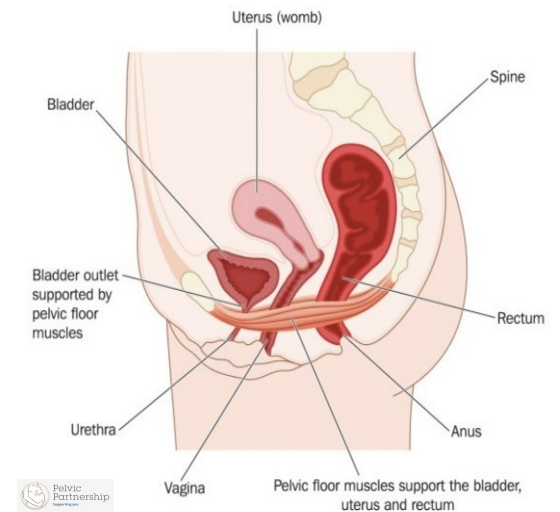
**Draw the pelvic floor muscles upwards and forwards from the back passage towards the front passage- like a ZIP!**

- Aim for **10 second holds x 10 repeats** to exercise your endurance muscles (tip: do this without breath holding, so count out aloud to ensure normal breathing).
- Aim for **10 repetitions** to exercise your strength (pulse) muscles.

Both exercises need to be completed **four times a day.**

**These exercises are for LIFE** — try to develop a daily pelvic floor exercise routine.

If you struggle with completing these exercises please seek a women’s health physiotherapy referral from your GP or consultant.



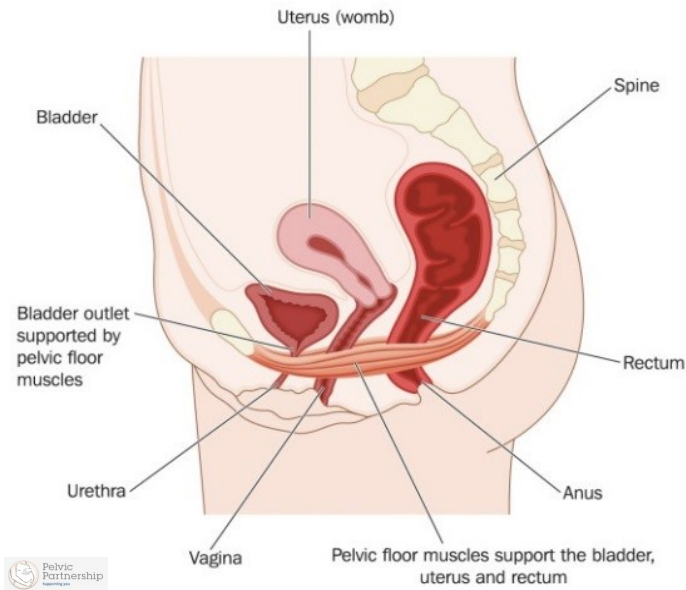
Squeezy app can be helpful and can be found by scanning or clicking this QR code:



# Pelvic Floor Exercise Advice

## The “knack”

Just before, and during, anything that increases the pressure in your abdomen such as: a cough, sneeze, lifting objects like your shopping bags, **remember to contract your pelvic floor muscles to brace against this pressure.**



A POGP Booklet can be found by scanning or clicking on this QR code:



You can watch a video by scanning or clicking on this QR code:



# Physical activity for adults and older adults

Benefits health	Reduces your chance of	Type II Diabetes	-40%
Improves sleep		Cardiovascular disease	-35%
Maintains healthy weight		Falls, depression etc.	-30%
Manages stress		Joint and back pain	-25%
Improves quality of life		Cancers (colon and breast)	-20%
Some is good, more is better		Make a start today: it's never too late	Every minute counts

## Be active

at least **150** minutes moderate intensity per week  
increased breathing able to talk

OR

at least **75** minutes vigorous intensity per week  
breathing fast difficulty talking

or a combination of both

to keep muscles, bones and joints strong

### Build strength

on at least **2** days a week

Activities: Brisk walk, Cycle, Swim, Gym, Yoga, Carry heavy bags, Run, Stairs, Sport, Bowls, Tai Chi, Dance.

### Minimise sedentary time

Break up periods of inactivity

### Improve balance

For older adults, to reduce the chance of frailty and falls  
2 days a week

UK Chief Medical Officers' Physical Activity Guidelines 2019

## Useful Resources

For more information scan or click on the QR codes:

Bladder Resources—Bladder & Bowel Community:



Bladder Health UK:



West Hertfordshire Therapy Unit Women’s Health Resources:



Resources from:



If you are unsure about any advice or information, please arrange to contact fracture clinic or contact the Physiotherapy department using the below contact details.

### How to contact us

West Hertfordshire Therapy Unit  
 Jacketts Field  
 Abbots Langley  
 Hertfordshire  
 WD5 0PA

**Tel:** 01923 378130

**Email:** [westherts.opphysioadvice@nhs.net](mailto:westherts.opphysioadvice@nhs.net)

**Website:** [www.westhertshospitals.nhs.uk/physiotherapy](http://www.westhertshospitals.nhs.uk/physiotherapy)

If you need this leaflet in another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call **01923 217 187** or email **[westherts.pals@nhs.net](mailto:westherts.pals@nhs.net)**



Author	Aoife O’Dowd
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