Improving Your Urinary Continence

There are several steps you can take to help re-train your bladder to improve accidental urine leakage. This fact card describes some that your doctor has prescribed as part of your treatment. Your doctor or nurse will review this information with you. If you have difficulty doing them, call your doctor or nurse.

The time and process to re-educate the bladder depends on such factors as the original diagnosis and type of treatment. Please share your questions and concerns with your doctor or nurse. They will support you as you work through this part of your care.

Decrease how much liquid you drink

- Limit the amount of fluid you drink if your doctor or nurse tells you to. There is no set amount of water you need – drink when you are thirsty.
- If you urinate frequently at night, do not drink any fluids after dinner.
- If you take medicine at night, take it with a sip of water.

Empty your bladder on a schedule

- Urinate every one to two hours if possible. If you are dry after one or two hours, increase the time between urinations. If you are still incontinent, decrease the time and empty your bladder more often.
- Do not wait until the last minute to empty your bladder.
- Empty your bladder as much as you can each time you use the toilet.
- If you have trouble emptying your bladder, urinate once; then walk away from the toilet. In 5-10 minutes, urinate again. Use your abdominal muscles to help empty your bladder.

Keep a voiding diary

- Use the form provided by your doctor or nurse to keep your diary.
- Choose any three-day period. Record when and how much you typically urinate during those three days.
  - Use the hat if you are a woman. Use the urinal if you are a man. Urinate and measure the amount of urine. Discard the urine in the toilet after you record the amount.
  - Use the collection device <u>every time</u> you urinate. Take the device with you wherever you go during the three-day diary period.
  - If you forget or are unable to measure a urine sample, tell your doctor or nurse.
  - Record any incontinence. Note whether it occurred:
    - When you were straining.
    - During stress such as coughing, sneezing, bending, lifting, or a change in position.
    - With an uncontrollable urge.

- On the way to the toilet.
- Without you knowing it.

Bring the diary with you on your next doctor's office visit.

Do the pelvic exercises described on the Kegel fact card

- Isolate the correct muscle. This will allow you to stop the flow of urine without contracting any muscles except those in your pelvis. You may also feel the rectum contract as if you are trying to avoid passing gas.
- Alternate contracting and relaxing the muscles of your pelvic floor for two to three seconds each. Repeat this 10 times, seven to ten times a day.
- When you have the urge to urinate, do the Kegel exercises four to five times, one right after the other. Concentrate on stopping the urge to urinate. Also do these exercises before coughing, bending, or lifting.

Modify your diet to limit or eliminate foods and fluids that irritate your bladder

Foods and drinks that contain caffeine and chocolate are irritating to the bladder. Caffeine is also a diuretic. It is likely to make you urinate more often. If you want to decrease the times you need to urinate, change your diet. You do not have to stop having all of the foods listed on this card. Rather, try to limit the number of irritants you have at one time. For example, if you drink coffee, try not to also use milk and a sweetener. Do not have apple juice and cereal with milk and bananas for breakfast.

Foods and Fluids That Can Irritate the Bladder

Alcohol
Apple juice
Avocado
Bananas
Caffeine (drinks and medications that contain caffeine)
Carbonated drinks (sodas)
Cheese
Chilies
Chocolate (carob and white chocolate are acceptable)
Citrus fruits and juices (low acid are acceptable)
Coffee (decaf, low acid are acceptable)
Corned beef
Cranberries
Grapes
Guava
Lentils
Lima beans
Nuts
Mayonnaise
NutraSweet® sugar substitute
Onions
Peaches
Pickles
Pineapple
Plums

Prunes
Raisins
Rye bread
Sour cream (imitation sour cream is acceptable)
Soy sauce
Teas (that contain caffeine)
Tomatoes
Vinegar
Vitamins buffered with aspartate
Yogurt

Please speak with your doctor or nurse if you have any questions.

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