

A close-up portrait of a man with shoulder-length, wavy brown hair and round, gold-rimmed glasses. He is smiling slightly and wearing a light brown collared shirt. The background is plain white.

PROMOTING CONTINENCE CARE

Bladder Training

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Being able to control our bladder is a skill we learn at a very early age and largely depends on...

- **The development of our nervous system (brain and nerve pathways)**
- **A process of toilet training.**

Take



As a result of both of these, we learn to recognise the sensation of a full bladder and are able to control the need to go to the toilet.

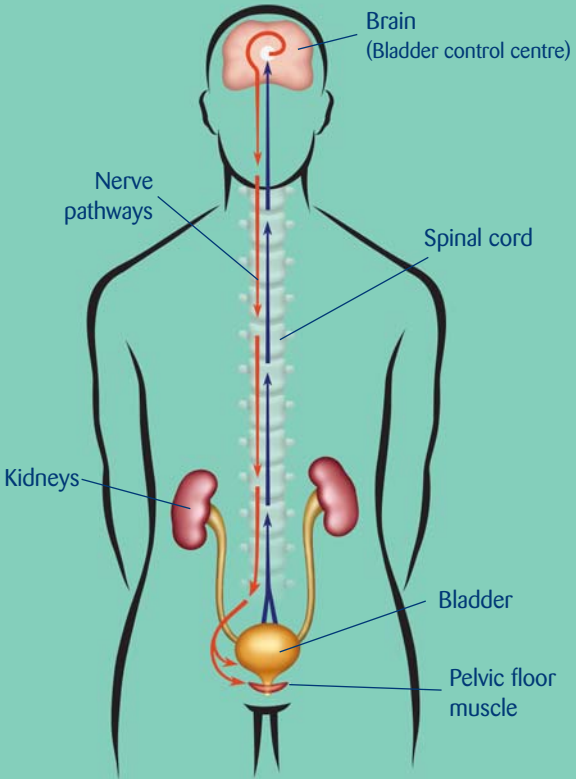
Control of the bladder then becomes automatic, but you can lose this skill.

control

If you have a problem, a simple Bladder Training Programme will help you regain control!

1 How the bladder works

The following information will help you understand how your bladder and brain work together.



The bladder is a muscular sac situated in the lower part of the body. It stores urine (the waste products from the kidneys).

When the bladder is approximately half full, a message is sent to the brain via the nerve pathways. The brain then sends a message back to the bladder which allows you to hold on until there is a toilet available.

A normal bladder will hold between 400 - 600mls of urine and is usually emptied between 4 and 7 times per day. However, the frequency of bladder emptying varies from person to person.

2 What can change?

Sometimes the bladder sends messages to the brain too early and before it is full. The bladder overrides the 'hold on' message from the brain causing the bladder to contract when you do not want it to (often referred to as an overactive bladder).

You may experience a strong desire to go to the toilet (**URGENCY**) and may even leak before you get there (**URGE INCONTINENCE**).

As the bladder does not get a chance to fill you may need to visit the toilet more often (**FREQUENCY**).

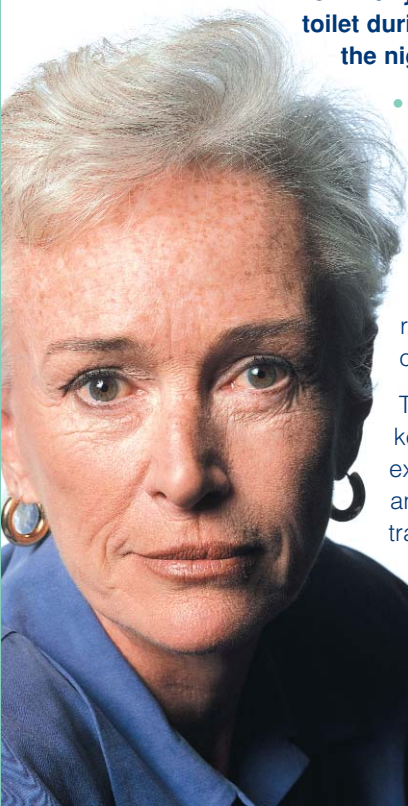
3 How you can help yourself

Prior to starting any treatment, you will need to find out how your bladder is working by recording what your present toilet habits are:

- **How many times you visit the toilet during the day and during the night**
- **How much urine you pass over 24 hours**
- **Whether there is any leakage and how often.**

All of this will need to be recorded for a minimum of three days.

The record you have kept will identify the extent of your problem and identify the correct training programme for you.



4 The Bladder Training Programme

The purpose of the programme is to restore a “normal” bladder pattern by:

- **Reducing the number of times you go to the toilet**
- **Increasing the amount of urine the bladder can hold**
- **Giving you the confidence that you are in control of your bladder again.**

Whether you go to the toilet ten times a day or fifteen times a day, try to hold on for one minute each time you have the urge to go. Increase this to five minutes and then to ten minutes etc. gradually increasing the intervals between your visits to the toilet.

Should you find that one minute is too much, start by counting to ten. When you can hold for the count of ten, try fifteen and so on.

Bladder training isn't easy. It may take weeks or even months to re-establish your normal pattern.

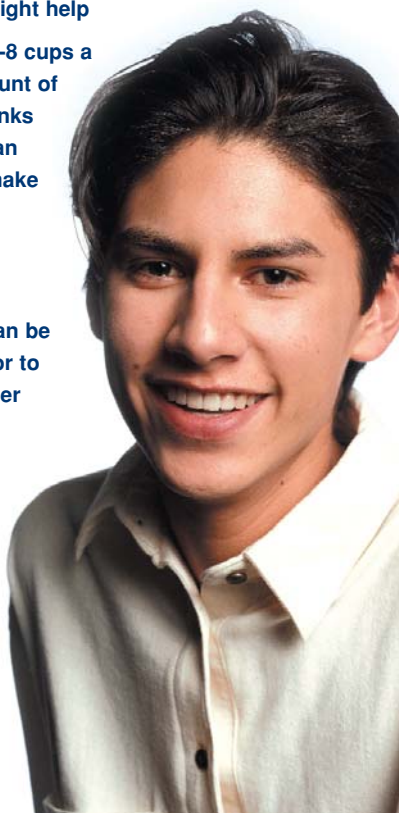
BE PATIENT AND PERSEVERE.

Eventually you should be able to “hold on” for at least three to five hours and not have to worry whether a toilet is near by.

“Remember, don't suffer in silence...seek help”

5 Top Tips to help you achieve success

- Make sure the toilet is easy to get to and that clothes are easy to remove
- Keep a measuring jug handy to measure your urine
- Always keep your chart up to date so that you can monitor your success
- If it takes you a week to achieve postponing going to the toilet for an extra five minutes, do not worry, only move on to the next stage when you are comfortable and confident with the times you have set yourself
- Pelvic floor exercises will help strengthen your “holding power”
- Don’t get into the habit of going to the toilet “just in case”. This will make matters worse. Only go when it is absolutely necessary
- Try and distract your attention from your bladder - watch television, do a crossword. Sitting on the edge of a hard surface might help
- Drink normally (at least 6-8 cups a day) and reduce the amount of tea and coffee. These drinks contain caffeine which can irritate the bladder and make it harder to hold on
- Avoid constipation. Eat a healthy diet
- Sometimes medication can be prescribed by your Doctor to help you with your Bladder Training Programme
- Take it slowly and persevere, it can often be **MIND OVER MATTER**
- Your Continence Advisor or your Doctor will give you support and advice.



National Organisations available for Information.

The Continence Resource Centre Helpline for Scotland
0141 201 1861

Continence Foundation Helpline
020 7831 9831

Incontact
020 7700 7035

Incontact provides information and support for people affected by bladder and bowel problems.

PromoCon
0161 834 2001

PromoCon offers impartial, unbiased information about continence products and services.

Your local continence advisor is:

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Other leaflets available include:

- Pelvic floor muscle exercises for women
- Pelvic floor muscle exercises for men
- Incontinence and skin care
- Understanding incontinence in adults

Produced by Synergy Healthcare as part of their commitment to promoting continence awareness.

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