

BLADDER TRAINING - CONTROLLING FREQUENCY AND URGENCY

URGENCY is a signal that your bladder wants to be emptied. It is a sudden need to urinate (“pee”) that may lead to urine leaks on the way to the bathroom. Most times, the amount of urine leaked (incontinence) is only small but it can be all the urine in your bladder.

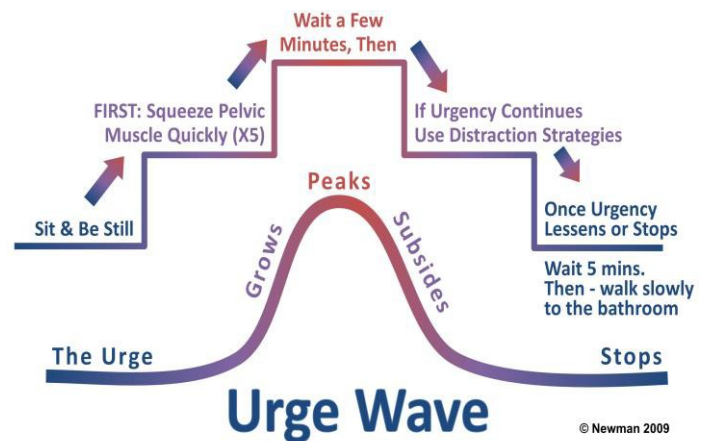
FREQUENCY is urinating (“peeing”) often, usually 8 times or more in a day. Bladder frequency can get worse if you start the habit of urinating “just in case.” The bladder never fills completely and gets used to holding only a small amount of urine. It is better to wait until the bladder is full.

Urgency and **Frequency** happen when the bladder muscle starts to contract before you go to the toilet.

Urgency follows a wave pattern; it starts, grows, peaks, and then subsides until it stops.

The key to controlling bladder urgency is by practicing “bladder training” and use techniques like “urge suppression” so you can delay rushing to the bathroom.

So, when you feel a sudden, urgent need to urinate, do not rush or run to the bathroom. Rushing will jiggle your bladder and increase the feeling of urgency and may cause bladder leaks.



How To Take Control Of Urgency

You can take control over your bladder urgency in these simple ways:

- **Focus on another body sensation.** Deep breathing is good. Sit down and take five slow, deep breaths. Think about the air moving in and out of your lungs instead of how your bladder feels.
- **Squeeze your pelvic floor muscles five times quickly and strongly.** These are called “quick flicks.” Often, this will relax the bladder so that the feeling of urgency goes away. Or, you could try holding one strong squeeze of your pelvic floor muscles. A good way to do this is to sit when squeezing your pelvic floor muscle. Try each way and see which one works best for you.
- **Distract yourself.** If you can distract yourself long enough, the feeling of urgency will often pass. You can distract yourself by focusing on a mental activity like a mind game. One is to turn your attention to counting backward from 100 by 7s or working on a crossword puzzle.
- **Do a task that requires a lot of thought**—for example, play a game on your computer or iPad or phone, write a letter, plan the weekly food menus, or some other activity that focuses your thinking. Note: TV watching and talking on the telephone are not distracting enough.
- **Use self-talk or good self-statements.** Tell yourself: “I am the boss, not my bladder.” “I am in control.” “I can beat this.” Find a statement that fits your situation and personality the best. Keep saying this statement over and over until the feeling of urgency passes.

Sometimes you will need to perform more than one of these approaches before the feeling of urgency goes away. If at first you do not succeed, do not give up. Remember, it takes practice to gain control over bladder urgency. But over time you will gain more control and have fewer feelings of urgency.

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WHEN TO GO TO THE TOILET

After the urge goes away, try to delay peeing by waiting a few minutes- maybe 5 mins - before going to urinate. If you don't think you can wait that long, then go to the toilet whether you feel you have to go or not.

Once you can easily wait 5 mins before peeing, stretch the time by waiting 10 to 15 mins. The goal is for you to increase the time between peeing.

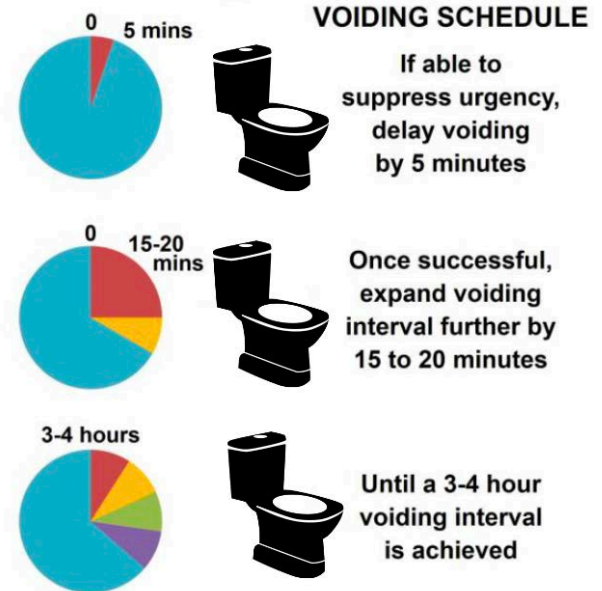
Never rush or run to the bathroom, as moving fast or hurrying may cause urine leakage. So walk slowly. If the urge returns on the way to the bathroom or in the bathroom, STOP, stand still, and squeeze your pelvic muscles until your bladder calms down.

WHEN TO TRY BLADDER TRAINING

Begin by only practicing this at home where you are relaxed and the bathroom is nearby. Empty your bladder right before going to sleep to reduce the chances of waking up to pee. Don't forget to cut down on drinks with caffeine and alcohol.

WHEN WILL I SEE A CHANGE?

In 3 to 4 weeks, you should see improvement. You should only be urinating every 3 - 4 or even every 5 hours during the day and be up less often at night to urinate. Do not despair or get discouraged if you do not see quick results.



Newman DK, Sung VW, Borello-France D. (2018) Structured behavioral treatment research protocol for women with mixed urinary incontinence and overactive bladder symptoms. *Neurourol Urolyn*, Jan 37(1);14-20.

Wyman JF, Burgio KL, & Newman DK. (2009). Practical aspects of lifestyle modifications and behavioural interventions in the treatment of overactive bladder and urgency urinary incontinence. *International Journal of Clinical Practice*, 63(8),1177–1191.