

# Bladder Training

**The overall aim of bladder training is to restore normal function. Research proves that bladder training is an effective treatment for some types of bladder problems.**

Bladder Training is a program designed to improve bladder function. It aims to:

- reduce the number of times you go to the toilet
- increase the volume of urine you pass each time
- give you the ability to defer or put off emptying your bladder.

## Normal bladder function

The normal capacity of the bladder is approximately 400 mls. It is usual to empty the bladder about every four hours. Normal function includes getting a message to go, being able to make it to the toilet, without rushing, or defer emptying the bladder if it is not convenient for you.

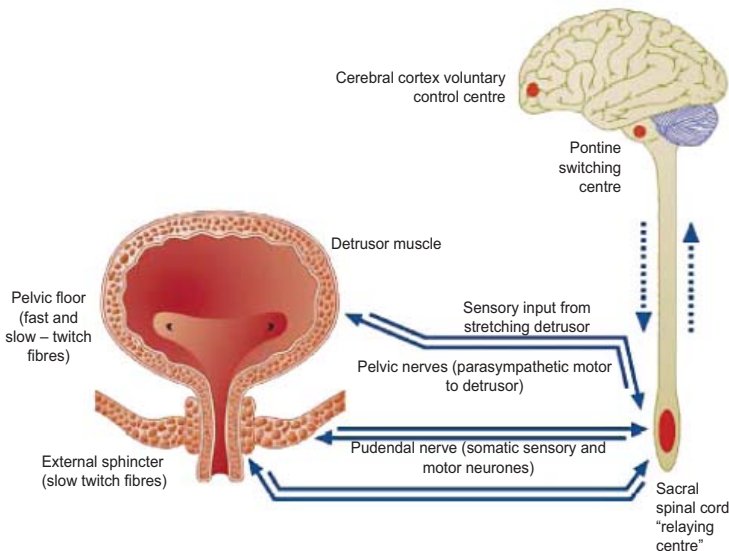
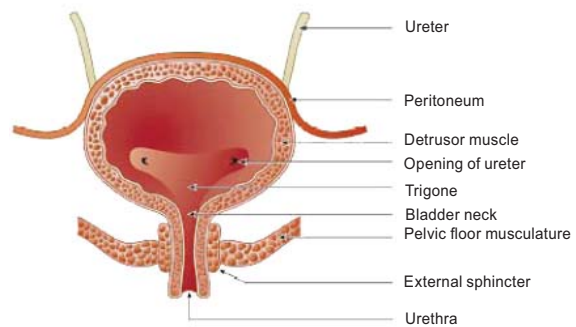
Normal bladder function involves a complex relationship between the bladder and the brain. The brain governs the function of the nerves and muscles in the pelvic floor.

## How do I retrain my bladder?

It is important to review any lifestyle factors which may be contributing to poor bladder function. These include:

- reducing/ ceasing caffeine intake (tea, coffee, cola drinks), alcohol and very sweet drinks
- not being constipated
- only going to the toilet when you need to go (not going "just- in- case")
- drinking about 1.5L of fluid per day
- maintaining a normal weight for height.

It is also important to have strong pelvic floor muscles.

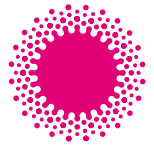


Please see facts sheets on Pelvic Floor Exercises and Normal bowel function.

## Setting a personal program

Every person will have different needs in regard to bladder training.

The first step is to complete a three day bladder diary to get baseline information about your bladder function. From this your personal goals can be set. For example if you start with a break of one hour between emptying your bladder, your initial goal may be to "hang on" for 5 or 10 minutes. The aim is to gradually increase the time you can "hang-on". Discuss appropriate goals with your Continence Nurse or Physiotherapist.



## Bladder Training

### How do you defer emptying the bladder?

There are some strategies you can use to stop the urge to empty the bladder. These include:

- contracting your pelvic floor muscles
- applying perineal pressure eg rolling up a small towel, placing it between your legs and sitting on it
- distracting yourself, turning your attention away from your bladder
- taking some slow deep breaths
- sitting down and “curling” your toes.

Be “tough” with your bladder and tell yourself you do not need to go to the toilet.

It is helpful to initiate these strategies prior to a known difficult situation. For example some women have difficulty getting out of bed in the morning, others have a problem known as “key in the lock syndrome” where they have uncontrollable urgency whilst approaching or unlocking the front door.

### How will I know if it is working?

You will not notice an improvement immediately, but gradually you should become aware of not having to go to the toilet as frequently, being able to stop yourself going, passing more urine each time you go, having less urgency, and not getting up to the toilet at night time.

The process of bladder training takes time and perseverance, requires effort and commitment from you, and may involve a number of months.

### What happens if it doesn't work?

Despite best efforts, in a few cases, the bladder will not respond to the program. In these cases some medications, prescribed by the doctor, may assist. If you decide to take medications it is important to continue your Bladder Training strategies.

### For more information or concerns contact:

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