

Urgency/Urge Incontinence

Continence Series Information leaflet 2

What is urgency/urge incontinence?

The sudden urge to go to the toilet is called urgency. If you do not get there in time and have an accident, this is called urge incontinence. This condition can affect both the bladder and the bowel.

It may be associated with frequency (passing urine more than six times a day) or nocturia (getting up more than once at night to pass urine).

Urinary urgency and frequency happen when the bladder muscle starts to contract before you get to the toilet. Bowel urgency may occur with loose stool or if there is weakness or damage to one of the muscles in the back passage.

What can I do about it?

General

- You can talk about your problem. Don't be embarrassed – remember doctors, nurses and physiotherapists are trained to deal with such problems.
- Remember to try to drink around two litres (four pints) of water every day.
- Avoid caffeine (found in tea, coffee, cola, and Red Bull), fizzy drinks and alcohol as these make you go more often. Use de-cafeinated drinks instead.
- Do your pelvic floor exercises as advised (see page 2).

Patient Information

Continence Service 0208 539 5522 Extension 5509

Whipps Cross Road, Leytonstone, London, E11 1NR www.whippsx.nhs.uk

Urinary Urgency

- Only go to the toilet when you need to, never go 'just in case'.
- Train your bladder to hold on for longer – when you get the urge, try to wait for one minute, then two minutes, then five minutes etc, until you are able to pass urine every three hours or so. Crossing your legs, pressing your pelvic floor with your hand, and sitting down may help.
- Avoiding drinking late in the evening.
- Seek help from your doctor who may be able to prescribe medication to help control your symptoms.

Bowel Urgency

- If you have chronic diarrhoea (loose stool lasting for weeks or months) you should seek advice from your doctor, who may be able to prescribe some medication.
- Reduce your fibre intake by avoiding pips, peel of fruit and vegetables.
- If your bottom gets sore, you can use a mild barrier cream such as Cavilon to protect your skin.

What are pelvic floor exercises?

These are exercises to strengthen the pelvic floor. The pelvic floor is a broad sling of muscles which runs from the front to the back of your pelvis.

- Close and “pull up” the front and back passages at the same time, as if trying to prevent yourself breaking wind and stopping the flow of urine.
- Avoid holding your breath, pulling in your tummy, tightening your buttocks and squeezing your thighs together at the same time.
- No one will be able to see you doing your pelvic floor muscle exercises.

The pelvic floor muscle exercise programme

- Aim to do five sets of pelvic floor muscle exercises a day. Do them while watching the news, sitting on the bus, waiting in the queue at the supermarket, boiling the kettle etc.
- Each set should consist of slow contractions (for endurance) and fast contractions (for power).

Slow contractions:

- Aim to hold your pelvic floor tightly for a maximum of five seconds.
- Rest for the same number of seconds.
- Repeat the contraction holding for the same length of time, for up to five to ten times.
- Rest for 30 seconds.

Fast contractions:

- Squeeze your pelvic floor tightly, and let go immediately.
- Aim for five fast contractions, making sure you let go completely after each one.
- As you get stronger try to increase the length of time you hold the slow contractions for, and increase the number of repetitions you do.
- Remember to hold your pelvic floor tightly with every cough, laugh, sneeze etc. to prevent leakage.

Where can I get more information?

Whipps Cross Continence Service	0208 539 5522	Extension 5509
Waltham Forest Continence Service	0208 430 8258	
Redbridge Continence Service	0208 822 3871	
Newham Continence Service	0208 475 2011	
West Essex Continence Service	01279 698901	
Bladder and Bowel Foundation	01536 533255	
	www.bladderandbowelfoundation.org	

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