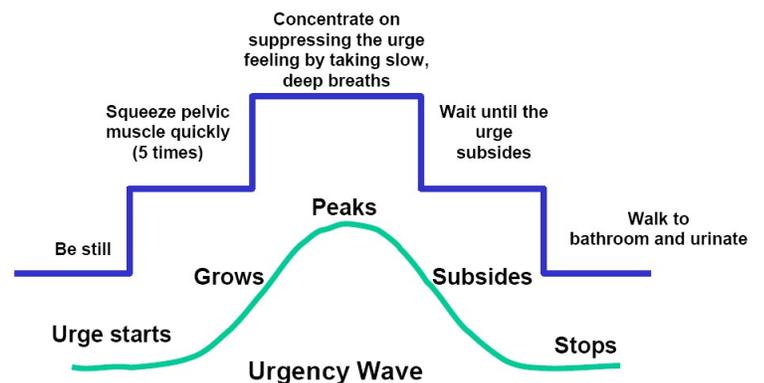


BLADDER TRAINING—CONTROLLING URGENCY AND FREQUENCY

URGENCY is the sudden need to urinate that may cause urine to leak on the way to the bathroom.

FREQUENCY is urinating often, usually 8 times or more in a full day (24 hours). Many times, the amount of urine leaked is only small. Frequency can get worse if you start the habit of urinating “just in case,” because the bladder never fills completely and gets used to holding 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 the urinary urgency is practicing “bladder training.” When you feel a sudden, urgent need to urinate, do not rush or try to hurry to the bathroom. Rushing will jiggle your bladder and increase the urge to go.



Follow a Bladder Training Schedule

To start bladder training, urinate every hour from the time you get up in the morning until you go to bed at night. If you have an urge to urinate before 1 hour has passed, then you may need to start with a shorter time, such as every 30 minutes. Continue to urinate on this schedule until you can do it every day for a week. With your urgency under control, increase the time between urinating by 15–30 minutes each week until you can last 3 to 4 hours. If you don’t succeed during any week, stay on the same schedule for one more week. Increase your voiding intervals by 1/2 hour every week, until you can wait to void every 3–4 hours or even longer.

TAKE CONTROL OF URGENCY

You can take control over your urgency and frequency by using some simple strategies. If you can distract yourself long enough, often the feeling of urgency will pass. It may take some practice with these strategies, but over time you will see that you are gaining more control and experiencing fewer episodes of urgency. When you feel urgency, try these strategies:

- **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

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holding one strong squeeze of your pelvic floor muscles. A good way to do this is to sit down and press your thighs tightly together. Try each way and see which one works best for you.

- **Distract yourself** by focusing on a mental activity: Use mind games. 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, balance your checkbook, write a letter, do handwork, plan the weekly food menus, or some other activity that requires a great deal of attention. Note: TV watching and talking on the telephone may be 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.” Create 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 urgency.

When to Go to the Bathroom

After the urge goes away, try to wait until your scheduled urinating time before going to the bathroom. If you don't think you can wait that long, at least wait several minutes longer, then go to the bathroom whether you feel you have to go or not. Never rush or run to the bathroom—walk slowly.

How Should I Start 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 urinate. Don't forget to cut down on drinks with caffeine and alcohol.

When Will I Notice a Change?

In 3–4 weeks, you should see improvement. You should only be urinating every 3–4 hours during the day and be up less often at night. Do not despair or get discouraged if you do not see fast progress.