Urge Urinary Incontinence

Information for Patients

This leaflet can be made available in other formats including large print, CD and Braille and in languages other than English, upon request.

This leaflet tells you about urge urinary incontinence and explains the treatments that can help you.

What is urge urinary incontinence?

Urge urinary incontinence is frequent, urgent visits to the toilet to pass urine: this is called frequency. Sometimes the feeling you need to pass urine comes too late and you 'wet your pants' before you get to the toilet. The fear of having further 'accidents' makes you go to the toilet when you first feel you have urine in your bladder. Often the problem is worse during the night and can lead to bed-wetting. Frequency is when you go to the toilet 8 times or more during the day and more than twice during the night.

What causes urge urinary incontinence?

Urge urinary incontinence happens when your bladder muscles start to contract (squeeze) before you reach the toilet. There are several causes, for example, irritation in your bladder which may be due to infection or medication, diseases of the nervous system, such as Multiple Sclerosis or Parkinson's Disease, anxiety or not drinking enough fluids. It can also happen for no obvious reason.

What is the pelvic floor muscle?

The pelvic floor is made up of layers of muscles, stretching like a hammock from your pubic bone to the bottom of your tailbone. These muscles help to hold your bladder and bowel in position, also the uterus (womb) in women. They prevent leakage from your bladder and bowel, only relaxing when your bladder or bowel is emptying.

What can I do to help myself?

It is important you drink plenty of fluid each day, for example, 1½ litres (6 - 8 large cups or glasses). However, you should not drink more than 2 litres (4 pints) of fluid each day. If you cut down on your fluids the urine in your bladder becomes concentrated and irritates your bladder more.

Caffeine may be an irritant to your bladder and increase your frequency of visits to the toilet. It is recommended that you gradually reduce your caffeine intake. Caffeine is found in tea, coffee, Ovaltine, high energy drinks, cola and cocoa. Try drinking water, squash or decaffeinated drinks instead.
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Possible irritants to the bladder include:

- caffeinated drinks.
- fizzy drinks.
- grapefruit juice.
- alcohol.
- stronger brands of tea which contain more tea and tannins.
- spicy food.
- tomatoes.

Try to avoid becoming constipated by eating a healthy diet with plenty of fruit and vegetables.

What tests will I need?

Your doctor or nurse will ask you some questions about your health and urinary incontinence and a sample of your urine will be tested to find out if you have a urinary tract infection (UTI). You will be asked to fill in a ‘frequency volume chart’ for at least 3 full days (if possible 3 days in a row), to check how often you go to the toilet and how much urine you pass.

What treatments are available?

Treatments for urge urinary incontinence can include:

- **bladder retraining.** This is a process where you retrain your bladder to hold a greater amount of urine. This should reduce the amount of times you need the toilet. Your nurse will check your chart and suggest ways to increase the time between your visits to the toilet. You should only go to the toilet when you really need to. Regaining control of your bladder is a gradual process.

  Sometimes your doctor may prescribe medication to reduce your symptoms of urgency and frequency.

- **pelvic floor exercises.** Your pelvic floor muscles prevent leakage from your bladder and bowel. Simple exercises carried out for 3 - 6 months can improve your muscle tone (strength) and help you to hold on longer. Your nurse or continence advisor will explain these exercises and give you a leaflet, 'How to do pelvic floor exercises'.

Are there any other treatments?

If bladder retraining or pelvic floor exercises do not help your problem your nurse will be happy to discuss further treatments, for example, you may benefit from a referral.
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to a continence advisor, physiotherapist or a doctor who specialises in urinary incontinence.

Further treatments can include medication to reduce your urgency and help with your bladder retraining, nerve stimulation, physiotherapy or surgery.

What if I decide not to have treatment?

Your urge urinary incontinence may become worse.

Contact numbers

If you need further advice or have any worries or concerns, you should talk to your nurse or continence advisor.

North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust

Continence Advisor
telephone: 01429 522500
Monday - Friday, 9.00am - 5.00pm

Non-urgent messages can be left at anytime on the answering machine.

Further information is available from:

Bladder and Bowel Foundation
SATRA Innovation Park
Rockingham Park
Kettering
Northants
NN16 9JH
telephone: 0845 345 0165
or via the website at www.bladderandbowelfoundation.org

PromoCon
Disabled Living
Burrows House
10 Priestly Road
Wardley Industrial Estate
Worsley
Manchester
M28 2LY
telephone helpline: 0161 607 8219
or via the website at promocon@disabledliving.co.uk
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RADAR KEYS (for disabled toilet access)
11 Church Street
Exmouth
EX8 1PE
telephone: 01395 222588
or via the website at www.radar.org.uk

Information used in the development of this leaflet

Abrams P, Khoury S, Wein A. The 1st international consultation on incontinence, co-sponsored by the WHO, Monaco; Health publication 1999.

This leaflet has been produced in partnership with patients and carers. All patient leaflets are regularly reviewed, and any suggestions you have as to how it may be improved are extremely valuable. Please write to the Quality Assurance Team, University Hospital of North Tees or email: patientinformation@nth.nhs.uk

**Comments, Concerns, Compliments or Complaints**

We are continually trying to improve the services we provide.

We want to know what we’re doing well or if there’s anything which we can improve, that’s why the Patient Experience Team is here to help.

Our Patient Experience Team is here to try to resolve your concerns as quickly as possible. If you would like to contact or request a copy of our PET leaflet, please contact:

- **telephone:** 01642 624719
  - Monday – Friday, 9.00 am – 4.00 pm
  - Messages can be left on the answering machine and will be picked up throughout the day.

- **freephone:** 0800 092 0084
  - Mobile: (can use text): 0779 506 1883
  - Email: patientexperience@nth.nhs.uk

Out of hours if you wish to speak to a senior member of Trust staff, please contact the hospital switchboard who will bleep the appropriate person.

- **telephone:** 01642 617617
  - 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

The Patient Experience Team is available to discuss your concerns in person Monday – Friday, 1.30 pm – 4.30 pm. The office is based on the ground floor at the University Hospital of North Tees.

**Data Protection and use of patient information**

The Trust has developed a Data Protection Policy in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1988 and the Freedom of Information Act 2000. All of our staff respect this policy and confidentiality is adhered to at all times. If you require further information please contact the Information Governance Team.

- **telephone:** 01642 833551 or email: information.governance@nth.nhs.uk

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