



Over active bladder

Overactive bladder syndrome (OAB) is an increase in urinary frequency, urgency and nocturia. This can occur with or without incontinence.

Frequency – the amount of times you urinate in a 24 hour period

Urgency – a sudden, uncontrollable urge to urinate, resulting in rushing to the toilet

Urinary incontinence – involuntary loss of urine before you reach the toilet

Nocturia – being woken from sleep by the urge to urinate

Normal Bladder function

The bladder is a muscle called the detrusor muscle. When the bladder is filling it sends a message to the brain. The brain then returns a message telling the detrusor muscle to contract, allowing you to pass urine. The pelvic floor muscles assist this process by relaxing.

On average it is normal to pass urine 6-8 times in a 24 hour period.
A healthy bladder can hold approximately 300-600mls of urine.

What is OAB?

If the detrusor muscle becomes overactive, it contracts regularly, giving you the urge to pass urine when the bladder isn't full. You may experience very sudden urges to pass urine that you cannot delay. This can result in your bladder emptying before you have made it to the toilet. Passing urine frequently can then mean that your bladder gets used to holding only small amounts of urine at a time.

Physiotherapy treatment

Bladder diary:

Your Physiotherapist will ask you to keep a diary of how often you pass urine and how much you drink, in order to get a better understanding of your symptoms. This will then guide how to re-train the bladder.

Bladder retraining:

This involves gradually increasing the time between visits to the toilet. The aim is to restore a normal bladder pattern by encouraging you to suppress and ignore the desire to pass urine, so that your bladder tolerates being stretched as it fills. Try these steps below:

1. Sit on a hard surface or rolled up towel
2. Contract your pelvic floor muscles
3. Distract yourself by thinking or doing something else
4. Walk calmly to the toilet - do not rush!

Lifestyle Changes

FLUID INTAKE

- Do not restrict your fluid intake as this causes your urine to become more concentrated which irritates the lining of the bladder. This causes the bladder muscle to contract more frequently even if it is not full.
- Some drinks can irritate the bladder and worsen symptoms. These include: tea, coffee, green tea, carbonated drinks, alcohol, or citrus drinks.
- Aim to have your last drink 2 hours before bed to reduce the number of times you get up to pass urine.

SMOKING

- Nicotine is a bladder irritant and can worsen symptoms of urinary frequency and urgency.
- If you live, work or your GP is based in Birmingham, please contact your GP for advice and support to help you quit for good.
- If you live, work or your GP is based in Solihull - please contact your FREE NHS stop smoking service on 0800 622 6968, text smoke free to 66777 or email contact.quit51@nhs.net.

CONSTIPATION

- Repetitive training to open your bowels can gradually weaken the pelvic floor muscles over time. It also puts pressure on the bladder.
- The best position to open your bowels effectively is to sit fully on the toilet, put your feet up on a stool, lean forwards, and breathe deeply. Do not hold your breath.

DIET

- What we eat can impact our bladder function, as the kidneys produce urine from our food also.
- Irritants include chocolate, tomato-based products, and certain acidic fruits.

MEDICATIONS

Some medications may worsen your symptoms. Speak to your GP if you have any concerns before stopping any prescribed medication.

Your GP may consider prescribing bladder medications to help ease your symptoms.

If you require this information in another format, such as a different language, large print, braille or audio version please ask a member of staff or email interpreting.service@uhb.nhs.uk