



# Holding on exercises

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**This series of exercises may help you with your symptoms of faecal urgency. If you have any questions or concerns, please speak to your clinical nurse specialist.**

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## Introduction

If you experience a feeling of faecal urgency (urgent need to poo) this may lead you to have to rush to the toilet. It may mean that your rectum (back passage), where the poo is stored, anal sphincter muscles and your confidence require some re-training to help you with this issue.

## Exercises

### Next time you go to the toilet to have a poo:

- Sit on the toilet and hold (wait) for one minute before opening your bowels.  
If you feel the need to open your bowels, try to relax and breathe normally. If you get urgency you may find it useful to try to squeeze your muscles in your anus (back passage) as if you are holding onto wind.
- Don't forget to take a watch or clock with you to time this.
- Gradually increase this to 5 minutes. Everyone is individual so some people may take longer, but try to build this up by a minute each time you go to the toilet
- Don't worry if you are unable to do this for the first few times but keep practicing.
- Once you have mastered this exercise, repeat the above but hold for 10 minutes before opening your bowels. It may be helpful at this point to take a magazine/book/your phone to read while you are doing this. Try to be patient as this process may take weeks or months to achieve 10 minutes
- This stage is harder but, remember, you are still over the toilet so this may help with your confidence.
- Once you are able to delay opening your bowels for 10 minutes on the toilet, try the same exercise but away from the toilet. For example, when you feel the need to have a poo, sit on a chair in or near the toilet and 'hold on'.
- Follow the steps above, going from one minute to 5 minutes before moving to the toilet to open your bowels.
- Once you feel comfortable with holding on for 5 minutes, increase the wait to 10 minutes.
- When you are able to delay opening your bowels for 10 minutes away from the toilet, try this next step.
- Start gradually moving further away from the toilet area, maybe by sitting on the bed or sofa (not too far from the toilet if you are not yet confident).
- As the muscles become stronger you may be able to hold for 10 minutes.
- As you feel more confident increase the distance between you and the toilet.

- Gradually, you will find that you are able to increase the distance and time away from the toilet. Try to be patient as it may take time to master these exercises. Practice frequently, in conjunction with your sphincter exercises to improve both control and confidence.

## Contacting us

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RBFT GI Physiology (Anorectal Physiology), Reviewed: December 2023  
Next review due: December 2025