



# How can I look after my bladder?

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**This leaflet provides information on general bladder care and tips for keeping it working normally.**

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## How does a normal bladder work?

During the day, your bladder should usually relax and fill up gradually. When it's full, it then sends a message to your brain to tell you that you need to go to the toilet.

If you are drinking enough and your bladder is behaving normally, you should usually need to pass urine (wee) up to six times in the day.

A full bladder usually holds anything above 300ml (just over 10 fluid ounces).

If you are needing to wee many times in the day and only passing small amounts, you might have an oversensitive or "overactive" bladder.

Make sure you tell someone, as we may be able to help you with this.

## Making sure you're weeing normally

When you go to the toilet to wee, make sure you always sit down properly on the toilet with your feet on the floor. Men should also sit to wee, as you will empty your bladder more fully in this position. "Hovering" over the toilet seat is not recommended, as this tenses up the pelvic floor muscles and may prevent you from emptying your bladder properly.

When you have finished, rock backwards and forwards and side to side (if this is safe for you to do), and then relax and try to pass more urine. You may find that there is a little more to come out and you will empty your bladder more fully. This is called "double voiding".

## What, and how much, should I be drinking?

The bladder can become irritated by certain types of drinks, and also by not drinking enough overall. You should be drinking about 1½ - 2 litres (that's about 2½ - 3½ pints) of clear fluid per day. Clear fluid includes water, juices and fruit teas.

If you do not drink enough, your wee will be dark and concentrated, which irritates the lining of the bladder and makes you want to wee even more.

**Coffee and tea:** Both coffee and tea contain caffeine. Caffeine irritates the bladder. It also acts as a mild diuretic (it makes you wee out more than you take in). Try to switch to decaffeinated tea and coffee if you are going to the toilet frequently.

**Artificial sweeteners:** Artificial sweeteners also irritate the bladder. These include things like Canderel, Splenda, Sweetex, Stevia etc., but also any drinks which say "no added sugar", "low sugar" or "zero" on them. It is better to go for the full sugar versions, and just have less of it. If you can, cut them out completely. Your bladder will thank you for it!

**Alcohol:** Unfortunately, alcohol is another bladder irritant – plus it also stimulates the bowel. This is because it is a diuretic. You will wee out more than you take in, leaving you dehydrated and with concentrated wee in your bladder. Cut down on alcohol to keep your bladder happy.

### **Getting up in the night to wee**

If you are getting up many times in the night to go for a wee, you should let the ward doctor know (or GP if you have left hospital). You may have an overactive bladder as mentioned above, or you may have an outflow obstruction causing you to retain wee in your bladder and making you feel like you need to go often.

Make sure you have your last drink of the day at least 1½ hours before bed, and empty your bladder before getting into bed. Try not to drink overnight – if you wake up thirsty, you likely did not drink enough during the day.

### **What if all these tips don't help?**

If the above tips do not help and you are still having bladder problems, please tell your doctor. If the doctor thinks it is appropriate, they may refer you to physiotherapy as an outpatient once you are home from hospital.

Further information can be found at:

- The POGP (Pelvic, Obstetric and Gynaecological Physiotherapy) [Patient Information | POGP \(thepogp.co.uk\)](http://thepogp.co.uk)
- Bladder and Bowel UK [Bladder & Bowel UK home page - Bladder & Bowel UK \(bbuk.org.uk\)](http://bbuk.org.uk)

To find out more about our Trust visit [www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk](http://www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk)

**Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.**

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