



# The National Maternity Hospital

Vita Gloriosa Vita ~ Life Glorious Life

## Physiotherapy Department

### Understanding and Managing Urgency Urinary Incontinence



#### Normal Bladder Sensation

As urine enters the bladder, the bladder wall (detrusor muscle) expands. At around 150–200 ml, the bladder begins to stretch enough to signal a sensation of fullness. As filling continues, the urge to pass urine intensifies. Most people will feel a strong urge to urinate at approximately 400–500 ml

#### What Is Urgency Urinary Incontinence?

Urgency Urinary Incontinence (UUI) is the involuntary leakage of urine that occurs when a sudden, intense urge to urinate can't be controlled long enough to reach the toilet. This differs from Stress Urinary Incontinence, which occurs during activities like coughing, sneezing, or laughing, due to different underlying anatomical causes



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# Regaining Control

## Understanding Normal Bladder Function

When you consume fluids, they enter your bloodstream, are filtered by the kidneys into urine, and then stored in the bladder. As the bladder fills, it should expand like a balloon and send signals that gradually increase your awareness of the need to urinate. This urge should remain under your voluntary control until you choose to release it by sitting on the toilet

### Lifestyle and Diet Modifications

Making certain dietary and lifestyle changes can significantly reduce detrusor overactivity and improve UUI symptoms. Your physiotherapist will guide you through the most relevant changes for your needs

Adjusting Your Fluid Intake: both excessive and insufficient fluid intake can worsen UUI:

- Too much fluid causes rapid bladder filling, which may trigger spasms
- Too little fluid results in concentrated urine that can irritate the bladder wall

Fluid Intake Goals:

- Week 1: Aim to drink \_\_\_\_\_ per day
- Week 2: Aim to drink \_\_\_\_\_ per day
- Week 3: Aim to drink \_\_\_\_\_ per day

### Reducing Caffeine

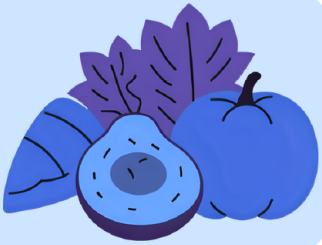
Caffeine (found in coffee, tea, chocolate, soft drinks, and sports drinks) may increase bladder spasms and urgency. Gradual reduction is advised to avoid withdrawal symptoms like headaches

### Limiting Artificial Sweeteners

Artificial sweeteners (common in diet products) may irritate the bladder. Try reducing or avoiding these, especially in diet soft drinks

### Spacing Your Fluids

Avoid drinking large volumes all at once. Spread your fluid intake evenly throughout the day to minimize sudden bladder filling

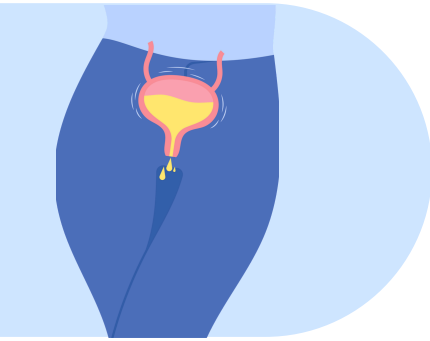


# Behaviour Retraining

## What Is Behaviour Retraining?

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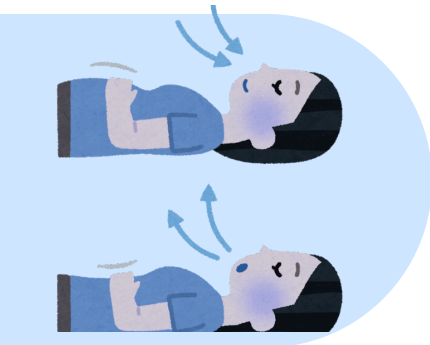
During a bladder spasm, the natural instinct is to rush to the toilet. However, sudden movement increases bladder pressure and the risk of leakage. Instead, use techniques to calm the bladder, delay urination, and reduce urgency. The key is to wait until the spasm subsides before walking calmly to the toilet



### How to manage a bladder spasm: Relaxation and reflex techniques

Try these techniques to help reduce the intensity and duration of bladder spasms:

- Relaxed, deep breathing
- Applying gentle pressure to the genital area
- Curling your toes inside your shoes or against the floor
- Rising onto the balls of your feet, tightening your calf muscles
- Sitting on your heel (providing pressure near the front of the vagina)
- Counting backwards by 7s (e.g. 103, 96, 89...)
- Distracting tasks such as creating a shopping list



**Important:** Some people have urgency caused by pelvic floor overactivity, not bladder overactivity. In these cases, pelvic floor contractions may worsen symptoms

**Tell your physiotherapist if contractions increase your urgency**

# Regaining Control

## Understanding Normal Bladder Function

### Why These Techniques Work

#### 1. Genital Region Pressure

The pudendal nerve carries signals from the genital area to the spinal cord—the same area where bladder signals are processed. Applying pressure here distracts the spinal cord from bladder signals and reduces urgency. Try:

- Pressing your hand gently upward on the genital region (only when in private)
- Sitting on your heel or arm of a chair to apply pressure
- If none of these are possible, simply sit down to help reduce pressure

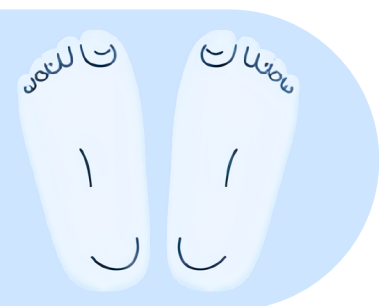


#### 2. Toe Curling / Standing on Toes

The posterior tibial nerve, connected to your bladder's control centre in the spine (S2–S3), can be stimulated by:

- Curling your toes
- Tensing calf muscles
- Rising on the balls of your feet

These actions can help relax the bladder and reduce urgency



#### 3. Cognitive Distraction

The prefrontal cortex (responsible for concentration and problem-solving) also plays a role in bladder control. During urgency episodes, focusing on cognitive tasks can reduce emotional panic and help relax the bladder

Try:

- Counting backwards by 7s
- Reciting a shopping list or planning your day



# Regaining Control

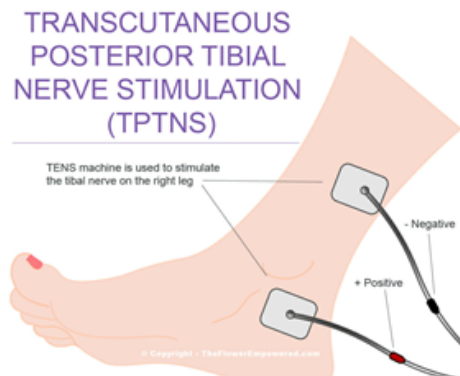
## Understanding Normal Bladder Function

### TENS for treating Urgency Urinary Incontinence

TENS (Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulation) helps manage UUI by sending gentle electrical impulses to the nerves connected to the bladder

These impulses:

- Calm down the overactive bladder muscles
- Reduce the frequent urge to urinate



#### Recommended Usage Guidelines

To use TENS effectively:

- Frequency: 2 to 3 times per week
- Duration: At least 30 minutes per session
- Total period: Use consistently for at least 6 weeks
- Combine with pelvic floor exercises and bladder training for better results

**Summary:** Urgency urinary incontinence can be improved with education, diet, fluid control, and behavioural strategies. Through understanding your body's signals and using simple techniques, you can reduce the frequency and intensity of urgency episodes. For personalised advice and to monitor your progress, work closely with your physiotherapist

[Link to Bladder Diary](#)

