

bladder disorders

Hypersensitivity disorders of the bladder can be managed successfully using a combination of therapies. Symptoms may include urgency, pain, spasm or urinary leakage. Keeping a three day diary of bladder symptoms, timing of fluid intake and voiding (urinating) often helps to determine factors which may cause or worsen symptoms.

In some patients, adequate fluid intake with frequent sips of water during waking hours helps to dilute the urine and improve symptoms. In other patients, excessive fluid intake can cause frequent voiding (urination) and thereby make the problem worse.

In patients who develop pain by holding urine in the bladder, urinating on a schedule (for example every two hours) can decrease symptoms. On the other hand, for patients who are frequent voiders, bladder holding to increase the interval between urinations by 10-15 minutes per week over a 3 month period can significantly decrease urinary frequency. See the detailed **Bladder Drill** instructions below.

Finally, a low potassium, low acid diet can improve symptoms in 40-65% of patients. See the **IC-Smart Diet** handout for foods to avoid and foods that are preferred.

Patience is imperative. Your symptoms will not change overnight!

Bladder Drills

The purpose of a bladder drill is to gradually;

- Increase the length of time between urinations
- Increase the amount of fluid your bladder can hold
- Diminish the sense of urgency and/or leakage you experience

Keeping a diary of your bladder activity is helpful to monitor your progress. It might be a good idea to start the program on a weekend, or when you plan to be near a bathroom. It is important to drink a minimum of eight glasses of fluid a day (80-100 ounces). Drinking the right amount of fluid daily and emptying your bladder at regular intervals helps to

decrease bladder infections. Managing your problem by limiting fluid intake is counterproductive and not recommended.

Days 1 to 3: After waking, empty your bladder every hour on the hour, even if you do not feel the need to go. Make sure you are drinking frequently. During the night, only go to the bathroom if you awaken and find it necessary.

Days 4 to 6: Increase the time between voids to every 1.5 hours while awake. Continue the same fluid intake and night time approach.

Days 7 to 9: Increase the time between emptying your bladder to every 2 hours. Continue the same fluid intake and nighttime approach.

Days 10 to 12: Increase the time between emptying your bladder to every 2.5 hours. Continue the same fluid intake and night time approach.

Subsequently work up to emptying your bladder every 3 to 3.5 hours.

You will be the best judge of how quickly you can advance to the next step. These instructions are an outline. You can change the timing, for example you may find it more comfortable to increase the interval by increments of 15 minutes. You may also adapt the pace of the schedule, depending on your individual bladder capacity and symptoms. For example, you may increase the hourly increments every 2 days instead of every 3 days.

A helpful hint: If you feel a sense of urgency, try contracting your pelvic muscles (Kegel exercises) quickly two or three times. Focus on relaxing all other muscles. If possible, sit until the sensation passes, then slowly make your way to the bathroom.

Keeping a written record of your bladder drills is often a helpful way to make behavioral changes. A diary shows you the value of the effort you are making. ■