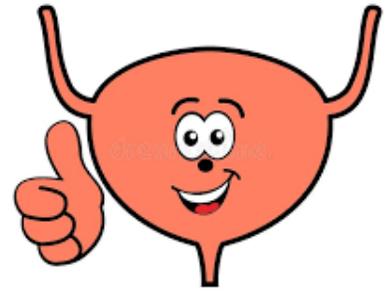




# Bladder Training for the Aging Adult



## What is Bladder Training?

- Bladder Training is a type of training that will help a person manage urinary incontinence. Urinary incontinence is the unintentional leakage of urine and can begin to happen more frequently with aging. Bladder training can help lengthen the amount of time between bathroom trips, can increase the amount of urine your bladder can hold, and improve your control over the urge to urinate. There are a few different methods of bladder training that we will cover.

## Why is Bladder Training Necessary?

- Bladder Training is needed because as our bodies age, there are many changes that happen to our bodies and our genitourinary system is highly impacted. Over the years, our kidneys decrease in volume, size, and function. Also, our bladder muscles weaken to almost half of their capacity. It is important that we continue to exercise these muscles and take control of urinary episodes. There are many physical reasons that an older adult will begin to experience episodes of urinary incontinence but bladder training is a non-surgical and non-pharmaceutical method of decreasing the frequency of these episodes.

## Before Starting Bladder Training...

- It is advised by health professionals to start by keeping a urination diary. It is important to record how much and how often you urinate to help create a proper urination schedule going forward that will benefit you the most. There is a link to a free and printable bladder diary in the “Other Helpful Resources” section below.

## Methods of Bladder Training:

- **Pelvic Floor Exercises:** These exercises, otherwise known as “Kegel” exercises, help strengthen the muscles of your pelvic floor, which are bowl-shaped and support your bladder. The strengthening of these muscles will help improve control of your bladder. There is a link for a PDF guide to Kegel exercises included in the “Other Helpful Resources” section below.
- **Delayed Urination:** This specific type of bladder training can help with urge incontinence, allowing you to put off urination when you feel an

urge. You can start by trying to hold your urine for 5 minutes every time you feel the urge to urinate. When you start to feel the urge before time is up, try relaxation techniques and breathing slowly. This is also where pelvic floor exercises will help. When it becomes easy to hold it for 5 minutes, continue to increase the time to 10 minutes, and so on. Do this until you are urinating every 3 or 4 hours.

- **Scheduled Bathroom Trips:** A way that you can try to control your incontinence is by going to the bathroom on a schedule, also known as timed voiding. This means that you go to the bathroom at set times whether you feel the urge or not. It is best to start by scheduling the trips every hour and gradually increasing the time between trips until you find a schedule that works best for you.

### **Keep in Mind...**

- It will be most beneficial to incorporate a variety of these methods into your routine for maximum success.
- Bladder Training can take from 3 to 12 weeks to be successful. Continue to keep track in a urination diary about any incontinence episodes or bladder leakage. This will allow for changes in the program that will help benefit you.
- **DON'T BE DISCOURAGED IF YOU DON'T HAVE IMMEDIATE RESULTS!**

### **Other Tips & Tricks:**

- It may be helpful to make changes to your diet. Some foods can irritate the bladder such as spicy foods, alcohol, and anything high in acid. Talk to your doctor about your diet if you think this is a contributing factor.
- Drinking less before bedtime can improve episodes of nighttime incontinence.
- If you are overweight, this can be a contributing factor to incontinence. Losing weight may help decrease episodes.

### **How will this improve your quality of life?**

- Bladder training will get you on a more routine bathroom schedule that will allow for prevention of episodes of incontinence. These episodes can be time consuming, embarrassing, and can restrict occupational engagement. However, the confidence of not having as many accidents from proper bladder training will allow for older adults to engage in their daily occupations without fear of incontinence.

## What Health Professionals Can Help with Bladder Incontinence and Bladder Training?

- Your Family Physician, a Urologist, a Gynecologist, a Urogynecologist, a Geriatrician, or an Occupational Therapist.

### Other Helpful Resources:

- Follow this link to a free and printable personal bladder diary: <https://www.nafc.org/resource-center/bladder-diary>
- If you are someone that uses Facebook, there is a group called the Bladder & Bowel Community Support Group. It is a private group that you must request access to, but once it is granted it is an online support community. You can meet new friends and have a safe online forum to talk openly about any personal experiences with incontinence. Follow the link below to request permission: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/BandBCommunity/>
- Follow this link for a printable guide to pelvic floor exercises or “Kegel” exercises from the University Health Network in Toronto, Canada: [https://www.uhn.ca/PatientsFamilies/Health Information/Health Topics/Documents/Pelvic Floor Kegel Exercises for women.pdf](https://www.uhn.ca/PatientsFamilies/Health%20Information/Health%20Topics/Documents/Pelvic%20Floor%20Kegel%20Exercises%20for%20women.pdf)

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