



Guide to a Healthy Bladder and Bowel

The bladder

- Try to limit fluid intake to around six to eight glasses of fluids (1½ to 2 litres) daily spread throughout the day, unless advised by the doctor.
- An increase in fluid intake will cause you to pass urine more often.
- A decrease in fluid intake can cause bladder irritation, urine infections and constipation .
- Fluids before bedtime - avoid drinking fluids after 6pm; drink most fluids in the early part of the day.
- Avoid drinks that irritate the bladder such as alcohol and take more of the drinks that do not irritate the bladder as shown in diagram below.

Drinks that **DO** Irritate the Bladder

- Caffeinated tea/coffee
- Green Tea
- Hot Chocolate
- Fizzy drinks (especially cola)
- Caffeinated energy drinks
- Fresh acidic drinks
- Blackcurrant juice

Drinks that **DON'T** irritate the Bladder

- Decaffeinated tea/coffee
- Water
- Diluted fruit juices
- Non acidic fresh fruit juices
- Herbal teas
- Red Bush tea



Normal bladder habits

Emptying your bladder daily around 4-6 times during the day, and during the night not more than once. This varies from person to person. Several factors can cause changes to this pattern.

Common bladder problems include:

- urinary incontinence - leakage of urine which you are unable to control
- overactive bladder - you need to empty the bladder urgently which is difficult to ignore
- incomplete bladder emptying - feeling that you have not emptied your bladder completely.

Urine and bowel output: what to look out for

Normal Colour of Urine



The Bowel

TYPE 1		Separate hard lumps VERY CONSTIPATED
TYPE 2		Lumpy and sausage like SLIGHTLY CONSTIPATED
TYPE 3		A sausage shape with cracks in the surface NORMAL
TYPE 4		Like a smooth, soft sausage or snake NORMAL
TYPE 5		Soft blobs with clear-cut edges LACKING FIBER
TYPE 6		Mushy consistency with ragged edges INFLAMMATION
TYPE 7		Liquid consistency with no solid pieces INFLAMMATION AND DIARRHEA

Note. Bowel movements should be soft, formed and easy to pass without straining. A normal pattern varies from person to person. The bowel diagram above shows different types of stool types.

What is a normal bowel habit?

Emptying your bowel from three times a week to three times daily. Bowel movements should be soft, formed and easy to pass without straining. A normal pattern varies from person to person.

Common bowel problems include:

- constipation - hard bowel movements passed less frequently than normal
- diarrhoea - watery or very loose bowel movements passed frequently
- urgency - sudden need to empty your bowels and reach the toilet on time
- bowel (faecal) incontinence - the inability to control your bowel movement.

Tips for a healthy bowel and bladder

Eat healthily

- A balanced diet includes whole grains (for example potatoes, rice, pasta) and at least five portions of fruit and vegetables per day.
- Eat regular meals (especially breakfast) as skipping meals can lead to an irregular bowel habit.

Do your pelvic floor exercises

The “pelvic floor” is the group of muscles that play a vital role in supporting and controlling the bladder and bowel in both men and women. When not exercised, the pelvic floor muscles weaken through lack of use causing loss of bladder and bowel control. If you don't use it, you lose it.

Regular pelvic floor exercise is important to strengthen the pelvic muscles. Do this by:

- sitting on a firm chair or lie on your back on the bed or the floor with knees bent and slightly apart. Rest your feet on the bed or floor
- tightening the muscles around your back passage as if you are trying to stop or slow the passage of wind. At the same time, tighten the muscles at the front passage as if you are trying to stop or slow the passage of urine. You should feel a squeeze and a lift inside. Try to hold this squeeze and lift for as long as you can up to a count of 10. Let the muscles rest for four seconds and then repeat. Repeat the contraction as many times as you can up to 10 times.
Don't forget to breathe.
- doing the same exercise but squeeze and lift quickly and let go immediately. This will help your muscles to react quickly when you cough, sneeze, laugh, etc. Do as many as you can up to 10. Try to fit into your daily activities three to five times daily. It may take a few weeks for you to start seeing results. You'll have the most benefit if you continue to do these exercises regularly for the rest of your life.

Healthy weight

- Excess weight may make bladder and bowel symptoms worse by putting additional strain on your pelvic floor muscles
- Weight loss and regular exercise (such as walking, cycling and swimming) can improve bladder and bowel symptoms as well as your general health.

Do not smoke

- Nicotine is a stimulant in cigarettes that may irritate your bladder and bowels causing you to go to the toilet frequently
- Smoking can cause coughing which puts a strain on pelvic floor muscles and worsen incontinence
- Bladder and bowel cancer risk is increased by smoking.

Avoid constipation

- Constipation can worsen bladder symptoms and weaken pelvic floor muscles by straining.
- Sit correctly on the toilet when emptying your bowels by leaning forwards with your elbows on your knees and putting your feet on a foot stool.
- Go to the toilet when you have the sensation to open your bowels and stay on the toilet until you have completely finished.
- Having a healthy diet, keeping active and having an adequate fluid intake will help.

Maintain good bladder and bowel habits

- Reduce urgency by avoiding the habit of going to the toilet "just in case" so the bladder can learn to hold larger volumes of urine.
- Avoid the risk of urine infections by taking your time when passing urine to ensure your bladder has emptied completely. Females should always wipe themselves from front to back after passing urine.

We are listening - how did we do?

We welcome your feedback, as it helps us evaluate the services we provide. If you would like to tell us about your experience:

- speak to a member of staff
- share your story at: www.careopinion.org.uk
- visit our website: www.wihb.scot.nhs.uk/feedback
- tel. 01851 704704 (ext. 2236), please leave a message on the answering machine if no one is available to answer.



Disclaimer

The content of this factsheet is intended to augment, not replace, information provided by your clinician. It is not intended nor implied to be a substitute for professional medical advice. Reading this information does not create or replace a doctor-patient relationship or consultation. If required, please contact your doctor or other health care provider to assist you to interpret any of this information, or in applying the information to your individual needs.