

Bladder retraining

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Bladder retraining is a simple and effective method used to try to overcome bladder problems. Bladder retraining can help your child to begin to hold more urine for longer periods of time. This process can take time and determination and will **not work overnight**.

Key points:

- To have good bladder control, the brain and bladder need to be working together.
- Learning to follow a bladder routine can help your child to develop regular voiding habits and avoid wetting, and possible infections.
- Retraining your child's bladder takes time, understanding and patience.
- To have a chance of successful bladder retraining will mean your child has to try and ignore the feeling that they need a wee for as long as possible.
- The bladder will then learn to relax and become less irritable.

Tips for bladder retraining:

- **Your child should drink more during the day;** water is the best clear fluid. This should be approximately 6-8 glasses per day.
- Fruit juices (especially blackcurrant) can irritate your child's bladder. Most fruits are acidic, and may cause burning or itching when weeing. Dilute fruit cordial is better.
- School may have to be involved to help to encourage your child's drinking in the day and to record the volume.
- Your child may need special bathroom privileges during this time, until better bladder control is achieved.
- **Your child should not drink much after 6.00 in the evening.** In fact, most of their drinks should be between waking and late afternoon (4-6pm).
- A large amount of drink in the morning helps to make sure there is enough wee in the bladder.
- Drinking after 6pm in the evening may make bedwetting worse.
- **Your child should avoid caffeine.** This can irritate the bladder and cause frequency and urgency in voiding.
- Common foods and drinks that contain caffeine are Cola, Mountain Dew, tea, coffee and chocolate.
- **Fibre is important,** as it will help your child to have a regular bowel routine and avoid constipation.
If your child is constipated it is more difficult for the bladder to fill up with urine. It is also hard to empty the bladder completely. **Constipation is a major contributing factor in children who have urinary tract infections and/or incontinence.** Foods that are high in fibre are fruits, vegetables, bran, cereals, whole wheat bread, rice, beans and lentils.
- **Your child should do exercises,** to help to strengthen the muscles around the outlet of the bladder (the urethral sphincter).
To help your child understand this exercise and feel the muscles there, ask them to squeeze a ball the size of tennis ball between their legs, right above their knees. This should be practised when they are not voiding.
- This should be done twice daily, for instance at breakfast and teatime.

- **Use a bladder diary, your child can make their own.** This will help to identify your child's bladder habits and patterns. It will also help to reinforce your child's efforts to retrain their bladder, by recording when your child wee's, what they had to drink, and how long they were able to hold the wee for.
- **From the diary a plan can be made,** such as setting realistic goals with the aim of helping the bladder to become stronger. The diary can also help to keep track of your child's progress over a period of time.

If there has been no improvement 2-3 weeks of work, then further specialist assessment and treatment may be required.