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1.800.529.5744  
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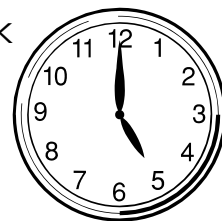
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National Association For Continence

## Bladder Retraining

A Six-Week  
Program



Promoting Quality  
Continence Care through

## Consumer Education

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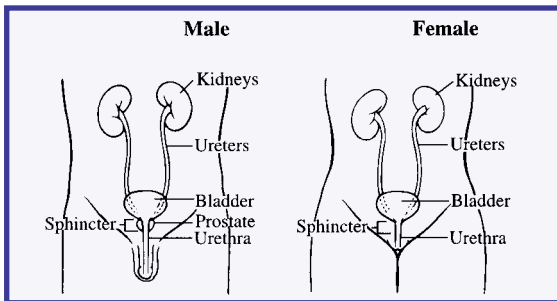
# Bladder Retraining:

## A Six-Week Program



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**NAFC Founder**

Urine is made by the kidneys and flows into the bladder where it is stored. As the bladder fills and stretches, a message goes to the brain that it is time to urinate. The brain sends a message down to the sphincter muscle (the ring of muscles that stops the flow of urine) whether or not it is a good time and place to go. See Figure 1.



**1: Urinary Systems - Male and Female**

Controlling the bladder and sphincter muscle is hard to do and may get more difficult as we get older. But there is good news! Many studies over the years have supported the success of bladder retraining programs for urge incontinence, stress incontinence, and overactive bladder (OAB) for both women and men.

See if these symptoms are like yours:

**Urge Incontinence:** the urgent need to pass urine and the inability to get to the toilet in time. "When I have to go...I have to go..."

**Stress Incontinence:** the leakage of small amounts of urine when laughing, coughing, sneezing, straining, or lifting. "Whenever I cough or sneeze, I leak."

**Overactive Bladder (OAB):** urgency, frequency, and getting up at night 2 or more times. Individuals can have OAB with or without urinary incontinence.

If you think that you have urge incontinence, stress incontinence, symptoms of both, or OAB, make an appointment with your doctor. For four days before your doctor's appointment, complete the enclosed "Uro-Log" (Voiding Diary). This is very important to help the doctor diagnose your condition. Take the completed forms and this Bladder Retraining leaflet to your appointment to be sure that the doctor thinks you will be helped by bladder retraining.

## A Six-Week Program to Retrain Your Bladder

You will need:

- Six copies (starting on page 7) of the NAFC "Continence Chart." (Save the "Uro-Log" you took to the doctor. You should see great improvement in just six weeks.)
- a pencil
- a clock
- a kitchen or pocket timer
- determination to stick with it

## Week One

(Use the Continence Chart included and marked Week One.)

Urinate when you first get up in the morning. If you have a hard time making it to the toilet when you get up, squeeze the muscle that holds back your urine before you get out of bed and count slowly to five. Then stand up and walk slowly to the toilet.

Empty your bladder as completely as you can and put a check (✓) in the gray column beside the hour you used the toilet. Now set your timer for one hour.

When the timer sounds, go to the toilet, even if you do not feel the need to empty your bladder. If you urinate, put a check (✓) in the gray column. If not, leave it blank. Then set the timer for one hour.

When the timer sounds, go to the toilet, even if you do not feel the need to empty your bladder. If you urinate, put a check (✓) in the gray column. Set the timer again for one hour. Continue this through the day until you go to bed.

## Learning to Control the Urge

When you feel the urge to urinate before the timer sounds, try to distract yourself.

1. Think about a very complex task:
  - a. balancing your checkbook
  - b. naming the streets through your city to a mall on the other side of town
  - c. remembering all the words to a favorite song, nursery rhyme, or hymn
  - d. listing the birthdays of ten friends
2. Think about something especially fun:
  - a. vacationing on an exotic island
  - b. lying in a hammock in the shade
  - c. watching the sunset over the ocean

The feeling that you need to go should pass and you may be able to wait until the timer sounds. If you cannot wait, go ahead and use the toilet. Make a check (✓) in the gray column corresponding to the hour that this urge occurred and you urinated. Resume your hourly scheduled toileting.

Whenever you leak urine, put a check (✓) in the white column corresponding to the hour it happens. Write "D" for damp or "W" for wet beside the check in the white

column corresponding to the hour this occurs. Change the damp or wet pad to a dry one.

You are ready to progress when, for a one week period, you are able to urinate every hour without leakage in between and when you are able to control the urge in between.

## Week Two

(Use the Continence Chart included and marked Week Two.)

Urinate when you first get out of bed in the morning. If you feel like you may not make it to the toilet, squeeze the muscle that holds back urine before you get up and count to ten. Then get out of bed and walk slowly to the toilet. Put a check (✓) in the gray column beside the time you used the toilet. Now set a timer or clock for 1½ hours. When the timer sounds, go to the toilet. If you urinate, put a check (✓) in the gray column beside the time. If not, leave it blank.

Set your timer or alarm clock for 1½ hours. When the timer sounds, go to the toilet. If you urinate, put a check (✓) in the gray column. Continue this all day.

In Week Two, just as in Week One, you will record any leakage you have in the white column by the hour in which it happened. Be sure to discard wet pads and put on a dry one.

When you feel the need to urinate before the timer has sounded, practice the distraction or relaxation techniques to control the urge until it passes. If you get uncomfortable and still have the urge to go, you may use the toilet. **Do not be discouraged if this happens; it is normal. Your bladder problems did not happen overnight and they will not be cured overnight — or even in a week or two.**

If you feel the need to urinate before the timer sounds when set at 1½ hours, you may opt to set the time for one hour and 15 minutes during Week Two. Then you can add increments of 15 minutes in the weeks that follow (Three through Six). Personalize our six week program as needed.

Once you have had 4-5 good days without leakage, you are ready to progress again.

## Week Three Through Six

(Begin each week with a new Continence Chart.)

In weeks three through six, you will increase the time between urination to one hour 45 minutes in week three, two hours in week four, two hours and 15 minutes in week five, and anywhere between 2½ and three hours in week six, depending on individual progress. Compare continence charts each week to review improvement.

### Tips for Success

1. Believe that you will be successful, and follow program directions to the letter.
2. Give bladder retraining a full six to eight weeks, and do not give up if your progress stops for several days or if you have a set back. This program has helped many people.
3. If you find that complex mental tasks or relaxing thoughts do not make the urge to urinate go away, you may try the following:
  - Squeeze the muscles that hold back a bowel movement and hold back urine until the urge passes — then relax.
  - Roll up a bath towel and keep it on a firm chair. Sit on this roll when you have a strong urge to urinate.
  - Place a rolled towel between your legs and push it up against your body.

Don't be discouraged by setbacks. Your bladder control problems may be worse

- when you are tired.
- when you have your mind on many things.
- when you feel tense and nervous.
- when you have a cold or stomach flu.
- on cold, rainy, windy days.
- right before a menstrual period (for women).

### More Ideas for Success

1. Avoid alcoholic beverages, coffee and tea. Drink plain water as much as possible.
2. Drink normal amounts of fluid evenly throughout the day. Six to eight glasses of water or non-citrus juices is plenty of fluid for one day.
3. Establish regular bowel habits. If you are constipated, add fiber to your diet, or use a laxative. Discuss this with your health professional.
4. Avoid going to the toilet "just in case." This may turn into a bad habit, and lead to frequent urination.
5. Studies show that medication for overactive bladder (OAB) may be used in conjunction with behavioral modifications to improve bladder control.
6. Nerve stimulation is another treatment option. It uses mild electric pulses to stimulate a sacral nerve in the lower back. This nerve influences the bladder and surrounding muscles that control urinary function.

### Want to learn more?

For further information on products and devices mentioned in this publication or to find an expert, contact the National Association For Continence (NAFC) by calling 1.800.BLADDER (800-252-3337) or on the Web at [www.nafc.org](http://www.nafc.org).

# Continence Chart for Bladder Retraining Program — Week One

Week beginning \_\_\_\_\_ Name \_\_\_\_\_

Please put a check (✓) in GRAY column each time urine is passed.

Place a check (✓) in WHITE column each time you are wet.

Add "D" for damp or "W" for Wet beside the check (✓)

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
6:00 am							
7:00 am							
8:00 am							
9:00 am							
10:00 am							
11:00 am							
12:00 pm							
1:00 pm							
2:00 pm							
3:00 pm							
4:00 pm							
5:00 pm							
6:00 pm							
7:00 pm							
8:00 pm							
9:00 pm							
10:00 pm							
11:00 pm							
12:00 am							
1:00 am							
2:00 am							
3:00 am							
4:00 am							
5:00 am							

# Continence Chart for Bladder Retraining Program — Week Two

Week beginning \_\_\_\_\_ Name \_\_\_\_\_

Please put a check (✓) in GRAY column each time urine is passed.

Place a check (✓) in WHITE column each time you are wet.

Add "D" for damp or "W" for Wet beside the check (✓)

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
6:00 am							
7:00 am							
8:00 am							
9:00 am							
10:00 am							
11:00 am							
12:00 pm							
1:00 pm							
2:00 pm							
3:00 pm							
4:00 pm							
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10:00 pm							
11:00 pm							
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1:00 am							
2:00 am							
3:00 am							
4:00 am							
5:00 am							

# Contenance Chart for Bladder Retraining Program — Week Three

Week beginning \_\_\_\_\_ Name \_\_\_\_\_

Please put a check (✓) in GRAY column each time urine is passed.

Place a check (✓) in WHITE column each time you are wet.

Add "D" for damp or "W" for Wet beside the check (✓)

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
6:00 am							
7:00 am							
8:00 am							
9:00 am							
10:00 am							
11:00 am							
12:00 pm							
1:00 pm							
2:00 pm							
3:00 pm							
4:00 pm							
5:00 pm							
6:00 pm							
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9:00 pm							
10:00 pm							
11:00 pm							
12:00 am							
1:00 am							
2:00 am							
3:00 am							
4:00 am							
5:00 am							

# Continence Chart for Bladder Retraining Program — Week Four

Week beginning \_\_\_\_\_ Name \_\_\_\_\_

Please put a check (✓) in GRAY column each time urine is passed.

Place a check (✓) in WHITE column each time you are wet.

Add "D" for damp or "W" for Wet beside the check (✓)

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
6:00 am							
7:00 am							
8:00 am							
9:00 am							
10:00 am							
11:00 am							
12:00 pm							
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5:00 am							

# Continence Chart for Bladder Retraining Program — Week Five

Week beginning \_\_\_\_\_ Name \_\_\_\_\_

Please put a check (✓) in GRAY column each time urine is passed.

Place a check (✓) in WHITE column each time you are wet.

Add "D" for damp or "W" for Wet beside the check (✓)

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
6:00 am							
7:00 am							
8:00 am							
9:00 am							
10:00 am							
11:00 am							
12:00 pm							
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2:00 am							
3:00 am							
4:00 am							
5:00 am							

# Continance Chart for Bladder Retraining Program — Week Six

Week beginning \_\_\_\_\_ Name \_\_\_\_\_

Please put a check (✓) in GRAY column each time urine is passed.

Place a check (✓) in WHITE column each time you are wet.

Add "D" for damp or "W" for Wet beside the check (✓)

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
6:00 am							
7:00 am							
8:00 am							
9:00 am							
10:00 am							
11:00 am							
12:00 pm							
1:00 pm							
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