

BLADDER RETRAINING

We all know that working out can build muscles, and that's just as true for the muscles that control your bladder as it is for your biceps or abs or heart.

In fact, many studies have shown that by retraining bladder muscles, women and men can successfully address many of the symptoms of urge incontinence and the urgency associated with overactive bladder (OAB).



GETTING STARTED

Of course, working those muscles can be a little more challenging than lifting weights, but it's nothing you can't handle. Before you get started, though, you'll want to have something to measure your progress against. That's where your bladder diary (You can download it at www.NAFC.org/diaries). You'll use your bladder diary to note such things as the times of urination, if you were able to completely empty your bladder, the time between bathroom trips, as well as diet information that may be impacting your condition.

While your physician will prescribe a program that's right for you, most bladder retraining methods share similar techniques.

1. SCHEDULE BATHROOM VISITS – Once you've used your bladder diary to determine how frequently you use the bathroom, try to add 15 minutes to that time between each visit. For example, let's say you go to the bathroom every hour. During retraining, you'll aim to go every hour and fifteen minutes. Even if you don't have to go, you'll still want to make that trip to the bathroom. This trains the brain and body. Then, after a set number of days, you'll gradually increase the amount of time between bathroom breaks.

2. DELAY URINATION. This is easier said than done. But when you feel the need to go, try holding off for at least 5 minutes. Then 10. And so on until you can make it 3-4 hours between urination. The key will be to stay on schedule, which keeps the training on track.

3. KEGEL EXERCISES. By strengthening the muscles that are directly and indirectly involved with urination, you will be able to better control when you have to go. For a full rundown on Kegel exercises, visit the NAFC web page at www.NAFC.org/kegel.

MORE TIPS TO TRY

Sometimes, it's the simplest of things that can make the biggest difference. To improve your success with bladder retraining, you can also try these tips:

- Limit beverages that increase urination, including caffeinated drinks like sodas, coffee and tea
- Drink less fluid before bedtime
- Go to the bathroom before you go to bed at night, and as soon as you get up in the morning

To get your free bladder diary, visit the NAFC page at www.NAFC.org/diaries and download your copy today.

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