



The Montreal Children's Hospital
McGill University Health Centre

DIVISION OF UROLOGY

Helping Your Child with Bladder Retraining (handbook for parents)



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Helping Your Child with Bladder Retraining

Introduction

Bladder problems (day and/or night-time wetting, repeated urine infections) can be embarrassing and frustrating for you and your child. Learning to follow a bladder routine can help by making your child's urinary (voiding) habits more regular. The information in this booklet will guide you in helping your child retrain his/her bladder to avoid wetting and infections.

How the Urinary System Works

Urine is stored in the bladder and sphincter muscles below the bladder work to hold back urine (fig.1). Normally, when we urinate, the sphincter muscles open and the bladder contracts to

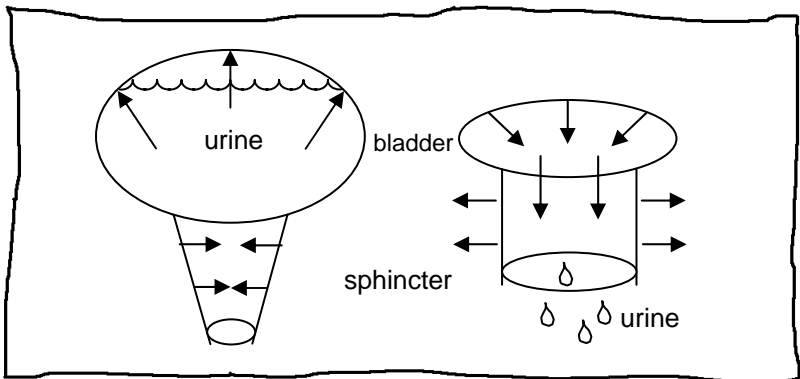


Figure 1.
Bladder filling.
all the
urine

Figure 2.
Bladder emptying.
release
stored
(fig.2).

In infants, the bladder empties automatically when it is full. As the child grows older, the brain develops control over the bladder (brain-bladder connection (fig.3).

The brain learns to:

- recognise signals of when the bladder is full and
- send messages telling the bladder to hold the urine until a toilet is reached.

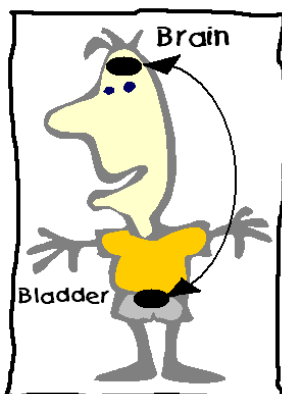


Figure 3.
Brain-bladder connection.

Why your child needs bladder retraining

At present, your child may not be urinating with a normal pattern.

Some children:

- Hold their urine for a long time.
- Urinate small amounts, but very frequently.
- Have a poor brain bladder connection. These children do not recognise or learn to ignore signals from their bladder. They squat down on their heels, cross their legs, or hold between their legs to keep from wetting.


All these habits can lead to bladder problems especially when the bladder is not emptied often enough or is emptied incompletely. Urine that stays in the bladder for a long period of time can leak out or become easily infected.

Bladder retraining teaches your child to:


- Go to the bathroom at regular intervals
- To empty the bladder completely
- Develop a stronger brain bladder connection.

Bladder retraining takes time, understanding and patience. A relaxed and matter-of-fact approach is helpful.

The following tips are offered to help encourage and support your child's efforts to develop a good bladder routine:

1.  **Drink plenty of fluids**, 4-6 (8 oz) glasses a day. Fluid helps flush the kidneys and bladder naturally and encourages your child to practice urinating more often.

- Water is best along with milk and diluted fruit juice. Most fruit juices are acidic and may cause burning and itching when urinating.
- Have your child drink most fluids before 6 p.m. (to avoid night-time wetting).
- Arrange with the teacher to allow your child to keep a water bottle on his/her desk. Your child may also need special bathroom privileges.
- Remember that certain foods such as soup, yogurt, ice cream, jello, pudding also contain a lot of water.

2.  **Make a schedule** for your child to urinate every 2-3 hours during the day. Some children may need to go even more often.

- The schedule will help to train your child to empty his/her bladder before it gets too full and begins to leak. It will put the child in control of his/her bladder instead of the bladder controlling the child.
- Emptying the bladder frequently also helps get rid of bacteria that causes urine infection.
- For young children, make a chart with your child and schedule your child's urinations regularly (i.e. every 2-3 hours) during the day. The child is then brought/goes to the washroom whether or not he/she feels the urge to urinate and is asked to try. An "X" or sticker is placed on the chart each time your child uses the washroom, no matter how

successful. Give plenty of praise and do not punish the child for not producing urine. Success will only come from a relaxed atmosphere. The stickers and praise help reinforce your child's effort to learn a new routine.

- For the school aged child, a voiding schedule matching your child's school day routine might be: when your child gets up in the morning, morning recess, lunch time, afternoon recess, after school, before supper and before going to bed.
- Younger children (ages 4-8) will need to be monitored by an adult.
- Older children and teenagers do well with their own "reminder system" (i.e. wearing a watch that sounds an alarm every 2 hours, charts and checklist).

The eventual goal of timed voiding is to train your child to urinate often without reminders.

3.



It is very important for your child to relax when urinating. Relaxing allows the sphincter muscles below the bladder to open so urine flows more easily out the bladder. Emptying the bladder completely

prevents wetting and gets rid of bacteria. To help your child relax :

- Provide privacy while your child is using the bathroom. Do not rush or use pressure.
- Make sure your child is comfortable sitting on the toilet. For a small child, an insert is often needed.
- For boys: pants need to be pulled down completely.
- For girls: pants, tights, leggings need to be completely pulled down to the ankles. Sit back on the toilet seat, open the legs wide apart and lean forward slightly.
- Take 3-4 deep breaths and relax the muscles of the head, arms, body and legs "like a rag doll".
- Imagine urine flowing (may need to turn tap water on).
- Allow plenty of time for urination. The process of relaxing to empty the bladder takes time. Plan to spend 3-5 minutes in the bathroom.

- For girls: wipe front to back (towards rectum) with new paper each time.
- Remember to praise your child for his/her effort and for spending enough time to "empty all the pee".

4.



To be sure that your child's bladder is empty, have him/her void twice each time (double voiding).
ie. Have child urinate once, then wash their hands and return to the toilet to urinate again.

5.



A high fibre diet is important to help your child have regular bowel movements.

- When your child is constipated, the bladder holds less urine and it is harder for the bladder to empty completely.
- Stool that stays a long time in the body can also be a source of urine infection.
- High fibre foods include fruits and vegetables, bran cereals, whole wheat bread, beans, lentils etc.
- Increasing the amount that your child drinks will also help soften the stools.

6.



Avoid drinks & foods containing caffeine (i.e. colas, coffee, tea, mountain dew, chocolate). Caffeine can irritate the bladder and cause your child to go to the bathroom more often.

7.



Drink 1 cup (8 oz or 250 ml) of cranberry juice or cranberry cocktail each day to prevent bladder infection.

Becoming and staying dry can be a difficult task for some children. Your child needs your support and encouragement if he/she is to achieve this important goal.

Children generally become dry during the day before becoming dry at night. In addition to bladder retraining, some children may also need a bladder medication.

Bladder retraining takes time and patience for the child, parents and health care team. We are all in this together. If you get discouraged or have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the Urology nurse.



Recommended Web site

www.aboutkidshealth.ca/JustforKids/peeing.asp



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REMINDERS



1. Drink plenty of fluids.



2. Make a schedule to urinate.



3. Relax when urinating.



4. Void twice each time.



5. Eat a high fiber diet.



6. Avoid drinks and foods containing caffeine.



7. Drink 1 cup of cranberry juice per day.

For support or information...

Call your urology nurse :

At : (514) 412-4400 ext.

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IMPORTANT : PLEASE READ

Information provided in this pamphlet is for educational purposes. It is not intended to replace the advice or instruction of a professional healthcare practitioner, or to substitute medical care. Contact a qualified healthcare practitioner if you have any questions concerning your care.