



This literature is produced as an acknowledgement of the life and work of Desmond and Hildergard Atherton. Desmond worked as a GP in Coventry and Hildergard was a founder Trustee of Coventry Churches Housing Association (now Touchstone Housing Association) and The ExtraCare Charitable Trust. Desmond's strength and patience towards those in his care and Hildergard's commitment and support to our charity's work have influenced the development of well-being service that is now benefiting our residents.



Bladder Re-training

Use a monitoring chart to establish a pattern for two to three days. This can identify loss of urine due to medication such as water tablets or drinking too much coffee (caffeine-based drinks) or alcohol. Using a monitoring chart and introducing pelvic floor exercises can help develop a pattern and gradually increase the length of time between passing urine.

Diet

- Drink lots of water, at least eight glasses per day - reducing fluid intake can cause more serious loss of bladder control and may lead to serious illness.
- Stay away from drinks with caffeine and alcohol which both cause excessive urine production.
- Some acidic fruit juices such as grapefruit and tomato juice can irritate the bladder.
- Eat plenty of vegetables and fibre. Staying regular is important since constipation can contribute to loss of bladder control.

Weight

Watch your weight. A five to ten per cent weight loss can help bladder control by reducing the intra abdominal pressure.



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Take extra care of your
bladder



Bladder disorders can present an enormous challenge because, unlike heart problems or arthritis, they can be painful to talk about even to our closest friends and family and make it impossible to ask for help. You may be surprised to know, however, that many women have experienced some type of urinary incontinence in their lives. This can range from unexpected leakage that comes with a cough, sneeze or laugh to the need to find a loo in a hurry! An estimated one out of three women over the age of 40 shares these experiences - and it is estimated in North America alone, over 15 million people suffer from some form of urinary incontinence. The figures could be twice as high if urine loss were an open subject, easy to talk about.

Myths and Realities

Having a problem with bladder control is a disease! Bladder control is not a disease; it can be a symptom or side effect of another medical condition. This is why it is important to talk to your doctor because treating the root ailment will often alleviate the loss of bladder control.

Incontinence is an inevitable part of growing older! Loss of bladder control is not an inevitable part of ageing. In fact, American research reports that 86% of people with loss of bladder control, who seek medical treatment, achieve improvements in control, including complete return of bladder control.

No effective treatment for incontinence exists!

Not true! There are a number of treatments available; almost everyone can be helped in some way and many sufferers can be helped to regain bladder control completely.

Drinking less fluid will help! No. This does not help - it actually does the reverse. Drinking less can cause more concentrated urine which can irritate the bladder and cause infection and dehydration. Reduced fluid intake can also cause constipation and make matters worse.

How the bladder works

The bladder has two functions; the storage and evacuation of urine. The kidneys filter waste and waste products from the bloodstream which produces urine. The urine is then passed to the bladder which is a hollow sac made from a fatty outer coating, a middle muscular layer and an inner mucous lining. The bladder holds up to 480 ml of urine under normal conditions and the bladder's sensory nerves let us know when it's time to urinate.

Types of bladder loss

- **Stress Incontinence** is the experience of a leakage when coughing, sneezing, laughing or lifting. This happens when the muscles under the bladder are weak and allow the urine to leak.
- **Urge Incontinence** is the loss of large amounts of urine with a feeling of not being able to reach the toilet fast enough. This can be caused by infection or muscle spasm that forces the urine out. Constipation can also cause urge incontinence through the loss of muscle control.

■ **Overflow Incontinence** is the lack of urge to urinate or a blockage which means the bladder never completely empties so overfills forcing excess urine out.

■ **Medication related** some medications cause the loss of bladder control or stop the signals that tell you to urinate. In both cases a change of medication may help.

What you can do...

Pelvic Floor Exercises

- Tighten the anal muscle, pull in and upwards.
- Tighten the vaginal muscle, pull in and upwards.
- Hold muscles tight, count to ten then relax.

Do these exercises in sets of five or ten, several times a day. After doing this for three to four weeks, increase the number of sets and hold each one longer (up to 20).

Loss of bladder control is not an inevitable part of ageing