

## Male Lower Urinary Tract Symptoms: Lifestyle Advice, Bladder Training and Pelvic Floor Exercises: frequently-asked questions

### **What is the pelvic floor and why does it become weak?**

Lower urinary tract symptoms (LUTS) include the need to pass water very frequently (frequency) and without much warning (urgency), associated with leakage of urine (urge incontinence); not being able to start to pass urine immediately (hesitancy), and a decrease in the force of the stream. This may also be associated with having to pass urine more frequently at night.

Sometimes after prostate surgery there can be leakage of urine during physical activity or when coughing or sneezing; this is stress incontinence.

Men can also experience leakage of urine after finishing voiding and then on walking away from the toilet (post-micturition dribble).

### **What is normal?**

The kidneys are continuously filtering blood to produce urine, which is stored in the bladder. The bladder will hold 400-500mls of urine, and an urge to pass urine is normally felt when the bladder is half full, thus giving time to reach the toilet. For various reasons, this message may become blurred or your bladder may contract to empty without warning, not allowing time to reach the toilet.

At the base of the bladder is the prostate gland, which circles the water pipe (urethra). In men over the age of 60, it is quite common for this gland to become enlarged and give rise to the above urinary symptoms. It is important for you to have consulted your GP regarding this so that he can examine the prostate gland.

Going to the toilet up to 8 times in 24 hours, with one of these occurring at night is considered normal.

There are several strategies that can be employed to control symptoms of urgency and frequency.

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## Lifestyle advice

### Fluid Management

A daily fluid intake of 1.5 – 2 litres is recommended. This is approximately 5-7 mugs.

Caffeine tends to act as an irritant to the bladder it is recommended that caffeine free products are tried. These are widely available. Substitute caffeinated drinks with water or fruit squashes. Caffeine is found in tea, coffee, chocolate, high-energy drinks like Red Bull and Lucozade, Coca-cola and cocoa. If you drink large quantities of caffeinated drinks you should cut down gradually over a fortnight to reduce withdrawal effects.

Large volumes of fluid within a short period of time and fizzy drinks can cause rapid filling of the bladder leading to frequency and urgency. Drinks should be spaced evenly through the day.

If you cut down on fluids to try to control frequency, this means urine will become more concentrated and will irritate the bladder more. You will also be more prone to constipation, which will exacerbate bladder symptoms.

Ideally urine should be a light straw colour. Very dark and strong smelling urine may mean it is too concentrated, and you should drink a bit more. If urine is very pale with no smell, then you may be drinking too much. During hot weather, air travel, after exercising and during sickness you will need to drink more.

The table below indicates some of the fluids and foods which can irritate the bladder.

Good	Possible irritants
Water	Caffeinated drinks Fizzy drinks
Decaffeinated drinks	Grapefruit juice Alcohol
Squashes and cordials	Spicy foods
	Stronger brands of tea and coffee contain more caffeine and tannins

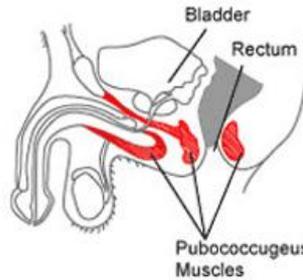
Cranberry juice should be limited to 400mls a day, and should be avoided if you have been diagnosed with interstitial cystitis or prescribed Warfarin.

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## Pelvic floor exercises

### Your pelvic floor muscles

The pelvic floor muscles form a hammock underneath your pelvis to provide support and control the bladder and bowel. The muscles attach to the pubic bone at the front, then span backwards to the coccyx (tailbone) behind. The openings to your bladder and your bowel both pass through the pelvic floor muscle.



### What does the pelvic floor do?

It supports your pelvic organs and abdominal contents, especially when standing or on exertion.

It supports the bladder to help stop leaking. The muscles need to work gently at all times and be able to work harder when you cough and sneeze to avoid leaking. When muscles are not working effectively you may suffer from urinary incontinence.

It is used to control wind and for 'holding on' with your bowels.

### Why should I exercise my pelvic floor muscles?

The sphincter muscles around the bladder neck may be damaged by prostate surgery, so the pelvic floor muscles become an important way of regaining continence. You can also contract your pelvic floor muscles after emptying your bladder to prevent post-micturition dribble.

To do this pelvic floor muscles need to be exercised. The exercise programme will help to maintain and /or improve their strength.

### The Exercise Programme

A pelvic floor contraction is performed by closing and drawing up you front and back passages. Imagine you are trying to stop yourself from passing wind and at the same time try to stop the flow of urine. The feeling is one of 'squeeze and lift'.

You can do this lying, sitting or standing. You can see if you are contracting the correct muscles by standing in front of a mirror and if you are contracting the correct muscle you will see the penis and testicles lift.

Start gently and stop if it hurts.

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DON'T

Pull in your tummy muscles excessively

Squeeze your legs together

Tighten your buttocks

You should aim to perform at least 10 contractions of the muscles, up to 6 times during the day, everyday.

Muscles only develop when you challenge them to work harder than normal.

This will be different for everyone. There are many other ways of exercising the pelvic floor muscles.

Develop a habit of bracing your pelvic floor muscles gently during everyday activities (lifting, carrying and during strenuous exercise) and particularly during any task which might challenge the bladder or put pressure through the pelvis.

Do not exercise using the pelvic floor muscles to stop and start the flow of urine as it may interfere with normal bladder emptying.

### **Tips for a healthy pelvic floor**

To relieve the load on your pelvic floor, aim for an acceptable weight for your height and build. Being overweight [a BMI over 29] has been proven to have a negative impact on symptoms of stress incontinence. There are many ways of losing weight; your GP should be able to guide you as to the most suitable method for you.

Lifting puts extra strain on the pelvic floor. If you do need to lift a heavy object remember to tighten your pelvic floor before you lift, and hold it tight until you have lowered the load.

Smoking - research suggests that smokers are more likely to experience urinary incontinence and this is due to the excessive strain that repetitive coughing puts on the pelvic floor. If you do smoke and would like support to stop smoking contact:

CAMQUIT – Cambridgeshire Stopping Smoking Service – 0800 018 4304  
Or visit [www.camquit.nhs.uk](http://www.camquit.nhs.uk) NHS Smoking helpline 0800 169 0169

### **Avoiding Constipation**

Many people find symptoms are worse if they are constipated. As the bladder and bowel are next to each other, a full bowel will affect bladder function.

To keep a healthy bowel, eat a balanced diet, which includes both soluble fibre (oats, barley, berries and fruit) and insoluble fibre (wheat-based foods, cereal, vegetables and nuts).

Eat regular meals.

You should go to the toilet to empty your bowel when you feel the need, as delaying may lead to constipation.

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Adequate fluid intake of 1.5-2 litres will also help.  
For further advice and information contact:  
Bladder and Bowel Foundation  
0845 345 0165  
[www.bladderandbowelfoundation.org.uk](http://www.bladderandbowelfoundation.org.uk)  
Local Continence Advisory Service 01353 652145 or 01480 416734

## **Who can I contact for more help or information?**

### **Oncology Nurses**

- Uro-Oncology Nurse Specialist  
01223 586748
- Bladder cancer Nurse Practitioner (haematuria, chemotherapy & BCG)  
01223 274608
- Prostate cancer Nurse Practitioner  
01223 274608

### **Non-Oncology Nurses**

- Urology Nurse Practitioner (incontinence, urodynamics, catheter patients)  
01223 274608 or 586748

### **Patient Advice & Liaison Centre (PALS)**

- Telephone  
+44 (0)1223 216756 or 257257  
+44 (0)1223 274432 or 274431
- PatientLine  
\*801 (*from patient bedside telephones only*)
- E mail  
[pals@addenbrookes.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@addenbrookes.nhs.uk)
- Mail  
PALS, Box No 53  
Addenbrooke's Hospital  
Hills Road, Cambridge, CB2 2QQ

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## Chaplaincy and Multi-Faith Community

- Telephone  
+44 (0)1223 217769
- E mail  
derek.fraser@addenbrookes.nhs.uk
- Mail  
The Chaplaincy, Box No 105  
Addenbrooke's Hospital  
Hills Road, Cambridge, CB2 2QQ

## MINICOM System ("type" system for the hard of hearing)

- Telephone  
+44 (0)1223 274604

## Access Office (travel, parking & security information)

- Telephone  
+44 (0)1223 586969

## Other information

### How can I get information in alternative formats?

Please ask if you require this information in other languages, large print or audio format: 01223 216032 or [patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk](mailto:patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk)

**Polish** Informacje te można otrzymać w innych językach, w wersji dużym drukiem lub audio. Zamówienia prosimy składać pod numerem: 01223 216032 lub wysyłając e-mail: [patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk](mailto:patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk)

**Portuguese** Se precisar desta informação num outro idioma, em impressão de letras grandes ou formato áudio por favor telefone para o 01223 216032 ou envie uma mensagem para: [patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk](mailto:patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk)

**Russian** Если вам требуется эта информация на другом языке, крупным шрифтом или в аудиоформате, пожалуйста, обращайтесь по телефону 01223 216032 или на вебсайт [patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk](mailto:patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk)

**Cantonese** 若你需要此信息的其他語言版本、大字體版或音頻格式，請致電 01223 216032 或發郵件到：[patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk](mailto:patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk)

**Turkish** Bu bilgiyi diğer dillerde veya büyük baskılı ya da sesli formatta isterseniz lütfen su numaradan kontak kurun: 01223 216032 veya

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[patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk](mailto:patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk)

## Bengali

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Addenbrooke's is smoke-free. You cannot smoke anywhere on the site. Smoking increases the severity of some urological diseases and increases the risk of post-operative complications. For advice on quitting, contact your GP or the NHS smoking helpline free on 0800 169 0 169

## Document history

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First published	May 2005
Review date	April 2014
File name	Male Lower Urinary Tract Symptoms: Lifestyle Advice, Bladder Training and Pelvic Floor Exercises
Version number	6.0
Ref	36/Info_04_11