General information about fluid intake

Aim to drink about eight teacups of fluid each day (approx 1.5 litres). If you do not drink enough you will produce concentrated urine which may irritate your bladder and make your symptoms worse.

It is sensible to drink less if you are going on a long journey or outings but make sure you drink 1.5 litres in total during the day. If you have lots of problems with your bladder, then have your drinks when it is easier to get to a toilet.

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Adapted from a booklet written by Ray Addison, Nurse Consultant, 2002 and a leaflet produced by Pharmacia & Upjohn Ltd 2000.
What can I do about it?
You can try something called bladder retraining. This is aimed at reducing the number of visits to the toilet each day and increasing the time between toilet visits to about three hours.

If you get up to the toilet more than once during the night:
- Try avoiding caffeine based drinks for five hours before bedtime as they can keep you awake
- Cutting down your total evening drinks may help
- Just take sips if you're thirsty during the night.

Why do frequency and urgency happen?
These symptoms happen when the bladder muscle starts to contract before we go to the toilet. This can happen if you get into the habit of going to the toilet 'just in case'. This means that the bladder only has to hold a small amount of urine, instead of waiting until the bladder is full.

Urgency and frequency can be affected by:
- Anxiety
- Infection
- Alcohol
- A disease of the nervous system e.g. Parkinson's

However, in many cases the cause is not known.

Caffeine
Caffeine is found in coffee, tea, chocolate, cola and many painkiller tablets (prescribed and bought). You can become used to the effects of caffeine so may not notice those mentioned in this leaflet. A maximum of six cups per day is advised. You should avoid caffeine if you have high blood pressure, high cholesterol, kidney, liver or heart disease. When using decaffeinated drinks, ensure the caffeine has not been extracted by chemical methods.

Caffeine can affect your bladder by:
- Slightly increasing the amount of urine you produce
- Reducing the length and depth of your sleep, so indirectly increasing the number of times you might want to pass urine at night
- Increasing urinary urgency, frequency and getting up to the toilet at night (nocturia) if you have an overactive bladder
- Slightly reducing bladder outlet muscle tone which may mean you leak urine more.

It may be beneficial for all patients doing bladder retraining to try to reduce their caffeine intake to less than 100mg per day (approximately two cups of tea or coffee).

Cutting down on caffeine
If you stop taking caffeine do it gradually over two weeks to avoid the following withdrawal symptoms:
- headache
- stomach upsets
- muscle pains
- a runny nose

• drowsiness
• irritability
• sweating