newlife PHYSICAL THERAPY

Bladder Retraining Urge Suppression Techniques

1 Keeping a **bladder diary**: Record your bathroom visits per day. A normal amount is voiding every 3-4 hours for 10-20 seconds with a strong stream and no odor. If someone is going more often, it could indicate urgency, small bladder capacity, or that you are managing your incontinence by constantly trying to keep the bladder empty. Also look at the liquids you are drinking...are you getting enough water (48-64 oz) or filling up with lots of caffeine in coffee and pop, which tend to irritate the bladder.

2 **Bladder Retraining** is the process by which you learn to put off voiding for progressively longer intervals. The goal is to restore the normal voiding interval to 3-4 hours. The urge to void can be suppressed by inhibiting nerves that cause the bladder to contract. *The urge to void is actually a wave. It starts to rise, and grow, and eventually peaks (when the sensation to void is at its strongest and when we tend to lose control of urine). The worst time to void is when the urge is at its strongest/at this peak. Once the urge wave starts to fall or subside, the urge to void goes away, and that is the best time to void.

Urge Suppression Techniques:

To decrease the urge to void, instead of giving in and trying to run to the bathroom with every urge, we are going to ask you to try to suppress the urge, and wait to void until that urge calms down.To do this...

- Sit down if you can, but if not, stand still.
- Take 4-5 relaxed diaphragmatic breaths, letting your abdominal muscles relax and your belly fill up as you inhale through your nose. Then let your belly relax back to your spine as you exhale through your mouth.
- Perform 4-5 GENTLE/SUBMAX pelvic floor contractions, holding each one about 3 seconds. Cues: "Tighten and lift as if you are holding back gas."
- Distract your mind by saying the alphabet backwards or count back from 100 by 3; 4; 6, etc. Repeat these until that urge subsides. Then calmly walk to the bathroom.

The concept then becomes this...

WEEK 1
Perform above urge suppression techniques at every inconvenient urge. Once your urge wave calms down, go to the bathroom to void. Goal: stay dry.

WEEK 2
Again, perform above urge suppression techniques at every inconvenient urge, but rather than going the bathroom once the urge wave calms down, go back to doing what you were doing; get busy, and wait another 15 minutes. Then void.

WEEK 3
Still continue with urge suppression techniques with every inconvenient urge, but this time wait 30 minutes to void.

WEEK 4
Self progression until you are voiding every 2-3-4 hours. **This may vary depending on your fluid intake, but the take home message is we do not want you rushing to the bathroom with strong urges. Wait for the urge wave to calm down, then go.

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