
What is a bladder program?

The bladder is a muscle that holds urine that the kidneys make. There are nerves that control the bladder. The bladder and nerves work together to empty the bladder.

- The bladder may not be able to empty like normal after a brain injury.
- This is because the nerve pathways from the brain to the bladder do not work the same.
- Your child may not be able to control their urge to empty their bladder. Your child may urinate at any time.

A bladder program can help:

- Your child urinate on a regular schedule and avoid accidents.
- Prevent bladder infections.
 - Holding urine for too long can cause infection.
 - Urinating regularly prevents infection by flushing out the bladder.

How does it work?

A good bladder program includes planning and patience. To help your child start to urinate, you may:

- Run water in the sink.
- Run warm water over their hand or wrist.
- Pour warm water over the genitals. This is the area where urine exits the body.
- Gently tap the area over the bladder.
- Lightly rub the inner thighs.

Avoid bedpans if possible. Tips for using the toilet include

- Have your child sit on the toilet or use the urinal every 1 to 2 hours.
- Increase the time between urinating to 3 hours when your child is able to go 2 hours without an accident.
- Keep increasing the time between urinating until your child can hold urine for their usual amount of time.
- Do not let your child sit on the toilet for longer than 10 minutes at a time.
- Have your child bear down gently but not too hard when they are on the toilet. Have your child blow bubbles or a pinwheel if they are young.
- Rinse and dry their skin well after your child urinates. Wash your hands well with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.

In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.

Bladder program, continued

Other tips include:

- Give your child plenty of fluids during the day as advised by your child's doctor. This helps keep the kidneys working well and prevents infection. Limit how much they drink after dinner if your child is wetting the bed.
- Have your child wear pants that are easy to remove.
- Praise your child for trying, even if they have not urinated.

How do I reduce the risk of bladder infections?

To help reduce the risk of bladder infections

- Offer your child plenty of fluids as advised by their doctor.
- Cranberry juice may be helpful.
- Avoid tight fitting clothes that can trap germs.
- Do not use bubble bath. It can cause or increase pain and irritation.
- Teach girls to wipe from front to back.
- Teach your child how to wipe and clean themselves when they go to the bathroom.

When should I call the doctor?

Call your child's doctor **right away** if they have any signs of a bladder infection, such as

- Pain when urinating
- Urinating small amounts often
- Back or stomach pain
- Urine is cloudy, has sediment (particles) or has mucus (white strands)
- Urine is pink or red
- Urine smells bad
- Fever (temperature of 100.4°F or higher)
- Vomiting (throwing up), diarrhea, chills or fussiness without other signs of sickness

Also call your child's doctor if:

- The bladder program is not working for your child.
- You have any questions or concerns about how your child looks or feels.

This teaching sheet contains general information only. Talk with your child's doctor or a member of your child's healthcare team about specific care of your child.

In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.