

# Recurrent urinary tract infections

## Underactive bladder

If the bladder does not adequately squeeze as it tries to empty, some urine will remain (a urinary residual) preventing bacteria from being flushed out and creating a medium for bacteria to grow in. Bacteria thrive in warm, moist areas.

Causes:

- Underlying medical/neurological problems e.g. multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's, diabetes
- Constipation
- An enlarged prostate (men only) squeezes the bladder outlet tube so that the bladder has to work much harder to force urine out of the bladder. Over a period of time the muscle can weaken and can no longer squeeze adequately to fully empty.
- Idiopathic; unknown cause

## Treatments/preventative measures

- Adequate fluid intake on a daily basis. Drinking 1.5-2 litres/3-4 pints of a variety of fluids per day stretches and flushes the bladder, helping to prevent infections and constipation.
- Replenishing the skin with topical oestrogen cream or pessaries gradually thickens and strengthens the skin. These are available on prescription.
- Avoid and prevent constipation by eating plenty of fibre in the form of fruit and vegetables, wholemeal, granary, seeded breads and wheat or bran cereals. The

## What if this doesn't improve my symptoms?

Unfortunately there are no medications available to make the bladder squeeze more effectively.

Learning to insert and remove a narrow tube (catheter) into the bladder to drain the residual urine several times per day can prevent further UTIs and reduce symptoms of urgency and frequency. This is known as intermittent catheterisation. The catheter is removed as soon as urine stops draining. Many people have found this process less difficult than they thought and find it relieves their symptoms significantly. You can be taught and supported with this technique by your bladder specialist nurse.

## PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) ensures that the NHS listens to patients, relatives, carers and friends, answers questions and resolves concerns as quickly as possible. If you have a query or concern call 01271 314090 or email [ndht.pals@nhs.net](mailto:ndht.pals@nhs.net). You can also visit the PALS and Information Centre in person at North Devon District Hospital, Barnstaple.

## Have your say

Royal Devon University Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust aims to provide high quality services. However, please tell us when something could be improved. If you have a comment or compliment about a service or treatment, please raise your comments with a member of staff or the PALS team in the first instance.

'Care Opinion' comments forms are on all wards or online at [www.careopinion.org.uk](http://www.careopinion.org.uk).

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