

Fluid adjustment

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This leaflet provides information and guidance on how to adjust fluids and retrain the bladder.

Fluid adjustment

- Ensure that you drink enough: 1½-2 litres (3-4 pints) of fluids in 24 hours.
- Do not drink too much e.g. not more than 3 litres (6 pints) in 24 hours.
- **Avoid having large drinks i.e. over ½ pint/300ml. These can aggravate stretch receptors in the bladder and increase urgency and frequency symptoms.**
- During our hot summer days or during exercise we all need to increase our drinks to avoid dehydration.
- You may find it helpful to measure the cups, mugs and glasses you use regularly to see how much fluid they hold.

The bladder is a muscle and can stretch to store ½ litre (1 pint) of urine. It is controlled by the nervous system, which sends messages to and from the bladder and brain signaling when the bladder needs to empty. The bladder fills at the rate of 1-2 millilitres per minute i.e. slowly.

If you drink too little fluid, this causes concentrated/strong urine which can **irritate** the bladder lining. Messages are then sent from the bladder to the brain to say “I’m full, please empty” causing the bladder to empty even though it is not full. This increases how often you need to go to the toilet.

Urgency, a feeling of ‘needing to go now’, also increases. So too can ‘urge incontinence’, where the bladder starts to empty before you sit on the toilet. If you have not been drinking enough you need to gradually increase your drinks to allow your bladder to get used to holding more urine.

Moderate/reduce irritant drinks and alternate with non-irritant fluids.

Irritant fluids include:

- Caffeine; tea, coffee, chocolate drinks, coke and energy drinks
- Artificial sweeteners, which are in low-calorie, diabetic, reduced or no added sugar squashes
- Alcohol
- Fizzy or sparkling drinks
- Antioxidants (flush system) e.g. green tea
- Herbal teas with fennel, nettle, dandelion and hibiscus
- High vitamin C (grapefruit, orange, blackcurrant, and for some people, cranberry juice)

Some people find some of these drinks more of a problem than others and therefore choose not to drink them at all. Often reducing them makes a big difference and reduces bladder problems.

If possible, please try to give up using artificial sweeteners in your hot drinks; it usually takes about a month for your palette/taste to adjust.

Non-irritant fluids include:

- Water
- Milk
- Ordinary squashes (avoiding lots of blackcurrant e.g. Ribena)
- Some fruit juices and juice drinks (avoiding orange and tomato)
- Some herbal teas e.g. chamomile, mint, and some fruit teas
- Decaffeinated tea and coffee cause less irritation to bladders than caffeinated varieties

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. You can also visit the PALS and Information Centre in person at North Devon District Hospital, Barnstaple.

Have your say

Northern Devon Healthcare NHS 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.

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