**Medication:**
A range of drugs called anticholinergics are available to help with overactive bladders. These drugs work by reducing urgency and increasing the volume of urine your bladder holds. Research has shown that combining bladder retraining with anticholinergics is more successful.

Anticholinergic medication will not cure your bladder problem, they may only relieve your symptoms. Anticholinergics should be stopped every three months for a few days to see if they are still having any effect. Please read the leaflet that comes with your medication carefully as anticholinergic drugs have a number of side-effects.

**Your questions and comments:**
If you have a problem when in hospital that the nurses or doctors are unable to resolve, you can contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). They offer assistance, advice and support for patients and their families. The PALS office is open to callers from 10am to 3.30pm, Monday to Friday. Telephone number: 020 8401 3210.

**Other sources of information and help:**
**Bladder and bowel foundation:**
SATRA Innovation Park
Rockingham Road
Kettering North Hants NN16 9JH
01536 533255
Fax 01536 533240
www.bladderandbowelfoundation.org

**Continence nurse helpline for medical advice:**
0845 345 0165

**Trust website**
www.croydonhealthservices.nhs.uk
Some bacteria will be able to get into your bladder and this is normal. Regular and complete emptying of your bladder will prevent you developing a urinary tract infection by flushing out these bacteria. It is not normal for you to have to strain to empty your bladder.

Urine is produced by your kidneys and helps to maintain a healthy bladder. Your urine contains waste products and chemicals not required by your body. Some can be toxic, such as nicotine (from smoking), which may affect bladder health in the long term (eg increased risk of bladder cancer).

Your urine is acidic and this creates a bladder environment where bacteria cannot survive. You need a good urinary flow to flush out bacteria and this needs to be over 200mls each time to be effective. Finally, think about your bladder and how it works. Are you doing all you can to keep your bladder healthy?

What causes an overactive bladder?

- Increases with advancing age
- Sometimes the cause is not known, but is more common in women
- Prostate enlargement in men
- Anxiety of not reaching the toilet in time, so going more often to reduce the risk of incontinence
- People whose nervous system is affected which can be caused by a number of reasons including, dementia, stroke, spina bifida, Parkinson’s disease, multiple sclerosis, diabetes or spinal cord injury

What will bladder retraining achieve?

- Reduce the total daytime visits you make to the toilet to under eight each day
- Increase the time between toilet visits to about three hours
- Reduce severe urgency to pass urine and make it more controllable
- Make your bladder hold more urine
- When you pass urine it should be over 250mls and under 600mls at a time
- Reduce the number of times you pass urine at night
- Reduce or stop urinary leakage that you get when you don’t make it to the toilet in time
- Reduce your anxiety about your bladder and increase your confidence

This leaflet is a guide to your care. It may not cover everything; if you want to know more please ask.

What is an overactive bladder?
Three factors make up the diagnosis of an overactive bladder. You can have all three, just one or various combinations or degrees:

- Urinary frequency: Going to the toilet often
- Urinary urgency: Urgency to pass urine which is abnormal to you
- Urgent incontinence: Leaking urine if you don’t get to the toilet on time

A diagnosis of an overactive bladder is usually made from symptoms as identified above, from a bladder chart or diary or following investigations such as ultrasound, urinalysis and urodynamics.

What is bladder retraining?
Bladder retraining is a behavioural (self-help) treatment for people with overactive bladders. It aims to increase the gaps between visits to the toilet and increase the amount of urine you pass each time. The treatment has no side effects and when combined with medication research has shown it can be very effective. Bladder retraining may not be as effective for the elderly, or those with life long bladder problems.

Your bladder health:
The bladder structure is important for your bladder to be healthy. It is a muscular bag which needs to shrink and expand to allow you to store and pass urine when you wish to. To allow this to happen you need a good blood supply to your bladder muscle and a working nervous and immune system. The main tasks of your bladder are to store and pass urine. Your bladder has to store enough urine (between 250 and 500ml) to allow you to carry out daily activities and have enough sleep.

At night it is normal to pass urine once. This usually increases over the age of 60 years, and you can pass urine up to four times a night by the age of 90. If you make your bladder hold too much urine (more than 600ml), it can damage your bladder. You learnt bladder control as a child, and it is normal to empty your bladder every three to four hours.
Methods for bladder retraining:
Bladder retraining requires you to hold on and not go to the toilet so often. You may need to do pelvic muscle exercises to help you hold on. If you wake up at night with a strong urge to pass urine, then use the toilet.

Start to avoid going “just in case” or every time you are near a toilet. Start to miss the occasional toilet stop. When you have an urge to pass urine, sitting down on something hard often helps. Be prepared that leakage may be a little worse when you start bladder retraining.

Watching the television, counting back from 100, read a book or do some pelvic floor exercises may take your mind off thinking about the toilet. Always try to avoid going to the toilet on a strong urge. You must control your bladder, it must not control you.

General information about fluid intake:
- You should drink about eight teacups or five mugs of mixed fluids each day (1.5 litres or 2¾ pints)
- Drinking more than this, eg over two litres (3½ pints), may cause you to pass urine frequently or have to go to the toilet at night
- Adults should produce over a litre (1¼ pints) of pale yellow urine each day, however, you should increase the amount you drink during hot weather and when you exercise because you sweat more. You should also drink more if you have a temperature or fever

If you do not drink enough:
(eg less than one litre (1¾ pints) per day)
- You will produce concentrated urine that may irritate your bladder
- It may increase the risk of a urinary infection particularly in women
- Your bladder may not work as well at it should because it has less urine to store
- You may become dehydrated
- Check with your doctor if you continue to be thirsty all of the time

If you get up to go to the toilet more than once at 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 are thirsty during the night
- When you wake in the morning and have a drink you produce some of your largest volumes of urine. This is due to hormonal activity on your kidneys and is normal

Grapefruit juice:
Grapefruit and grapefruit juice are known to interact with some medicines, increasing or decreasing the desired effect. To be safe it is not advisable to take any medicines with either of these. Please read the leaflet that comes with your medication to check if it is affected by grapefruit.

Herbal teas:
It does not always follow that herbal drinks or teas are healthier than conventional ones. If you have high blood pressure avoid Jasmine and Blackcurrant. Many herbal teas should be avoided during pregnancy and while breast feeding.

Chamomile tea may help with some bladder problems, but have no more than three cups per day. Chamomile tea should not be taken if you have any allergies, are asthmatic, have eczema, are on blood thinning tablets (anticoagulants), are pregnant or whilst breast feeding.

Coffee and caffeine:
Caffeine is found in coffee, tea, chocolate, cola, green tea and many painkilling tablets (prescribed or bought). Caffeine increases acid secretion in your stomach and can cause or aggravate ulcers, heartburn or indigestion.

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 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 pelvic muscle tone which may mean you leak urine more.
Remember when drinking cranberry juice:
- It is not a cure-all for all bladder problems
- It may harm your teeth
- It may increase your weight because of its calorie content
- Diabetics should consult a dietician before taking even the low sugar variety
- Arthritis may be aggravated by any acid-based drink
- It may cause heartburn or upset a hiatus hernia
- May cause diarrhoea if you have IBS (Irritable bowel syndrome), diverticulitis or colitis
- During attacks of cystitis the acidity of cranberry juice may cause bladder pain
- It is not known whether cranberry juice reacts with any medication, so avoid taking them together

You must not drink it if you are taking any blood thinning products such as warfarin or aspirin.

Bladder retraining classes:
These classes are suitable for people who have bladder control and leakage problems. All our classes are hosted by specially trained expert nurses.

General details:
All classes are held in The Lancaster Suite classroom at Croydon Hospital. Classes enable you to meet other people with similar problems, gain support, keep you motivated and improve the quality of your life. They also aim to make you more informed and confident about your bladder problem. There are classes held for women and men separately. There are two different classes, a first class and a review class.

Bladder retraining classes will cover:
- How to maintain a healthy bladder
- Fluid advice including advice on cranberry juice, coffee and caffeine
- Good and bad toilet habits, going just in case
- Tips and hints on how to deal with frequency and urgency, bladder retraining advice
- Drugs related to bladder problems, will they help you?
- How to do pelvic muscle exercises