



Drinking and the toilet

When you drink more you may find you need to visit the toilet more often too.

That's positive, it means you're drinking well, but for some people, getting to the toilet more often causes problems. This section offers you some ideas to help, so that you can keep drinking well and feeling well.

Did you know?

- **Adults of all ages** should drink at least 3½ pints (2 litres/70 fluid ounces) of fluid a day.
- **By not drinking enough, it's easy to become dehydrated.** Dehydration may affect your health and wellbeing. Some people find they get headaches and think less clearly. More serious problems may be constipation, urinary tract infections and increased risk of having to go to hospital.
- **It's normal to need the toilet** when you wake up and before and after eating.
- **It's normal for older people to go to the toilet 5–8 times** during the day and an additional once or twice overnight. Most people's bladders can hold around ¾ pint of urine.
- **Drinking more can help bladder control.** Cutting down on drinks can irritate your bladder and make things worse!



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A number of things may irritate your bladder:

1

Aspartame is an artificial sweetener found in some diet drinks. Check labels and avoid drinks or foods containing aspartame for a few days.

3

Smoking and nicotine may irritate your bladder so quitting smoking can help. Ask your doctor if you need help to quit.

2

Caffeine can increase the feeling of needing to go to the toilet quickly. Try avoiding caffeinated drinks for a few days to see if it helps. Try decaffeinated tea or coffee instead.

4

Some medications (such as diuretics) can affect going to the toilet. If this is a problem for you, talk to your doctor.

Drinks that don't usually irritate the bladder include water, herbal and fruit teas, milk and diluted fruit juice.

If you experience a burning pain while peeing, or your urine is cloudy or smells unpleasant, see a doctor as soon as possible, as you may have an infection.

Try keeping a diary

If you think something is affecting your bladder, keep a bladder and drinks diary for 3–5 days ([Appendix A](#)). Record what type of drinks and medications you take and when, each time you go to the toilet, and how long you can wait.

This can help identify how long your bladder can hold on, and whether any drinks (drunk in the two hours before a toilet visit) are irritating your bladder.





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Things that may help with going to the toilet:

Try to avoid constipation

Straining can damage your pelvic floor muscles. Drinking plenty, exercising and eating fruit and vegetables can help prevent constipation.

Go slow

Take your time when emptying your bladder – being in a rush can lead to incomplete emptying, increasing the risk of incontinence and infections. For men, sitting down on the toilet can help you relax.

Dress for speed

Wear comfortable, easy to remove clothes so you don't need to rush.

Break the mind/bladder association

Repeatedly going to the toilet and peeing small amounts may weaken bladder muscles. Try to delay passing urine for 5-15 minutes, so you pee larger amounts.

Note

Doing [pelvic floor exercises](#) can strengthen the pelvic floor and help with continence. Also, speak to your physiotherapist, healthcare professional or GP about this, they may be able to help. Your local Age UK can also offer advice.

What is incontinence?

Incontinence is involuntary loss of urine and/or faeces (wee or poo). It affects many people, especially older people. There are three types, urinary incontinence (loss of wee), faecal incontinence (loss of poo) and double incontinence, which is both.

Worries about incontinence and the embarrassment it can cause is a common reason why people choose to drink less in later life – thinking that by not drinking, they won't need the toilet so much. This is a myth, people need to drink and go to the toilet to stay healthy.

Find a loo

When you go somewhere new, check where the toilets are to ensure you know where to go. Plan to make sure you are able to get to the toilet at times you usually need to go.

When you are out and about, the UK toilet map can help you find public toilets:

www.toiletmap.org.uk

Buy a key to access disabled toilets from:

shop.disabilityrightsuk.org

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Further support

Your GP and the Norfolk Continence Service offer lots of advice and support. You can refer yourself to the Norfolk Continence Service: 01603 216 021.

If you need incontinence pads you can buy them in supermarkets and chemists. The Norfolk Continence Service may also supply them following an assessment. Other equipment or adjustments may also help – perhaps a raised toilet seat or a toilet frame. If you think you may need extra equipment talk to your GP or see the NHS and Age UK websites.



NHS

www.nhs.uk/conditions/urinary-incontinence



Age UK

www.ageuk.org.uk

[🔍 Bladder and bowel information guide](#)

Note

If you live outside of Norfolk, then speak to your GP or healthcare professional about NHS continence services in your area.