



# HOW TO CONTROL Abnormally Strong Urges to Urinate

**When your bladder fills with urine, the walls stretch, sending a signal to the brain. You feel this signal as an “urge” to urinate, which usually continues until you empty your bladder. In some cases, you may feel the urge even if your bladder is not entirely full, which can lead to several unnecessary trips to the bathroom. You can control these urge signals, and with practice, you can learn how to make them stop without having to go to the bathroom every time.**

The urge signal is connected to your thought process as well as to the nerves in your bladder. Mind distraction techniques, where you stop thinking of going to the bathroom, can help take away the urge and help return you to a more normal pattern of urinating. Practice the following highly effective mind distraction techniques to control abnormally strong and frequent urges to urinate. Go through these steps as needed throughout the day. You can also use them at night or early in the morning when you feel like you may lose your whole bladder in bed.

**FIRST: STOP** your activity, stand quietly or sit down for about 60 seconds or until you have taken control. Try to stay very still to maintain control. Distract yourself by thinking of something other than going to the bathroom. Avoid moving and rushing to the toilet, as this can make the bladder contract harder and might cause leakage.

**SECOND: CONTRACT YOUR PELVIC FLOOR MUSCLES** lightly five to six times, holding for two seconds each, to keep from leaking. Squeeze, and let go. It may take a few weeks of exercise to get your pelvic muscles strong enough. If you are concerned that leakage will occur if you relax the muscles, maintain a holding contraction. Pelvic floor contractions send a message to the bladder to relax and hold urine.

**THIRD: RELAX** and walk slowly to the bathroom while you continue to squeeze your pelvic floor muscles. If you still feel the need to urinate, do so. If not, delay urinating until the urge returns. Remember the goal is to increase the time between each trip to the bathroom.

*Use a daily bladder (or “voiding”) diary to gradually achieve longer time periods between trips to the bathroom. Start with what is comfortable and increase by 15-30 minute increments per week. Your goal is to go longer periods of time during the day and at night without urinating.*

Please call Rehabilitation Services at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, **617-754-9100**, with any questions.