



THE MAMA'S PHYSIO

Bladder Health for New Mothers

It is very common to notice changes in your bladder habits after you give birth. Some of these changes may include increased frequency, urgency or leakage, especially with coughing or sneezing.

Some habits can make the problem worse. These include:

- Hovering over the toilet instead of sitting down
- Stopping and starting mid-stream to do your pelvic floor exercises
- Trying to force the flow of urine
- Going to the bathroom 'just in case...' – especially at night.

Urgency symptoms:

- Do you leak when you feel the urge to urinate?
- Do you leak on your way to the bathroom or when you put the key in your front door?
- Do you leak when you hear running water?

Tips for controlling urgency:

When you feel the initial urge, stop, sit down if you can and take a deep, calming breath.

Practice doing 5 to 10 strong, quick contractions with your pelvic floor muscles– this sends a message to your bladder to relax

Putting pressure on your perineum (the area between your vagina & anus) may also help. If this is not possible, simply crossing your legs may help.

Distract yourself by counting from 10 slowly down to 1.

Leaking with activity symptoms:

Do you leak when you cough or sneeze?

Do you leak when you pick up your baby?

Do you leak when you exercise?

Do you leak with intercourse?



THE MAMA'S PHYSIO

Homework:

Practice 'The Knack'! This exercise trains your pelvic floor to engage and support your bladder before there are any increases in pressure, for example coughing, sneezing, or moving from sitting to standing.

Method:

First, practice engaging your pelvic floor – imagine you are closing the openings of your pelvic floor (as if you were trying to stop passing gas or urine), then lift your pelvic floor up and in, preferably as you exhale. This sounds more complicated than it really is! Take a few practice attempts first to tune in to what your body is feeling.

When you feel confident about engaging and then relaxing your PF, you can add some gentle abdominal work. As you exhale and engage your PF, try to gently pull your lower tummy in to your spine, then let everything relax.

Now to put it all together! Scoot forward to the edge of your seat, take a breath in and as you exhale, engage your PF and tummy as you stand up, then relax your pelvic floor completely.

Bladder health tips for new mothers:

- When you get up during the night to feed your baby, don't go to the bathroom 'just in case'. Go when you need to go! When you urinate, the stream should last long enough for you to count '1 Mississippi, 2 Mississippi...all the way to 8 Mississippi. Your bladder has had a baby pressing on it for the past nine months – you need to help it regain its capacity by only going when you actually need to go, not just because there is a bathroom available.
- Make sure you are drinking enough water. How do you know? Your urine should be just about clear.
- Don't get constipated as straining to have a bowel movement can put a lot of pressure on your bladder's support system.



THE MAMA'S PHYSIO

- Avoid bladder irritants such as alcohol, coffee, black tea & carbonated drinks. They can make you have more urgency, frequency and leakage. Some women find spicy foods, chocolate, dairy, tomatoes and citrus can irritate their bladders. Try eliminating a potential irritant for a few days and see if there is a change in your bladder's behavior.
- When you go to the bathroom, sit on the toilet with your feet on the ground. This helps your pelvic floor relax and your bladder empty more efficiently. Don't hold your breath or strain during urination.