



It is common to have reduced urge or no urge to pass urine and/or difficulty completely emptying your bladder after having your baby. If the bladder is not completely emptied then the urine that is left behind can build up over time, this is known as **Urinary Retention**.

What urinary retention might feel like?

- Bladder pain or discomfort
- No urge to empty the bladder
- Difficulty passing urine
- A sense of not fully emptying
- A slow or a start/stop stream of urine
- A need to strain to pass urine
- Leakage from an overly full bladder

After a vaginal birth or the removal of the urinary catheter, the maternity staff will encourage you to start emptying your bladder within 4 hours, and will place a measuring device in the toilet so that we can measure how much urine you are passing (void). Once we have measured the amount of this void and the 2 voids following it, we will assess your comfort level, and then advise you on the next stage of your recovery.

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Date Created: July 2022 Version 1

Review Date: July 2024

Updated By:

How to empty your bladder completely?

You should empty your bladder approximately every 2-3 hours during the day and at least once overnight. The best position is to sit on the toilet seat and do not hover above it.

- Use a footstool or raise your heels so that your knees are higher than your hips.
- Lean forward, with your feet apart and your elbows on your knees.
- Allow your tummy to relax and do some gentle deep breaths to help the pelvic floor relax.
- Allow yourself time, do not rush or **STRAIN** to empty the bladder





Hints to help empty your bladder

- Urinate in a warm shower
- Running water in the background
- Place your hand in cold water as you empty your bladder
- Firmly tap over your bladder with your fingers
- Ask your midwife or doctor for pain medication if pain is stopping you from emptying your bladder

Double bladder emptying

If you feel your bladder has not emptied completely, rock your pelvis backwards and forwards on the toilet seat and try again. If not successful, stand up, walk around the room and then try to empty your bladder again.

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How much to drink

You need to be drinking to thirst, around 2 Litres of fluid each day (2.7 Litres if you are breastfeeding). Your drinks should be spread out over the day so you don't suddenly overload the bladder. Not drinking enough fluid can irritate the bladder and make symptoms worse. It is best to drink water or herbal teas and reduce the amount of tea, green tea, coffee and fizzy drinks as caffeine can irritate your bladder.

Your pelvic floor muscle exercises

Your pelvic floor muscles are important for healthy bladder function.

Ask our staff for a leaflet on Pelvic Floor Exercises if you would like more information

Care of the genital area to reduce pain and/or swelling

- Doing gentle pelvic floor exercises lying down can help with healing, reducing pain and swelling.
- Regular ice to your perineum in the first 48 hours to help reduce pain and swelling.
- A pad held firmly against your pelvic floor by supportive underwear can also help.