

URGE SUPPRESSION TECHNIQUES

The following techniques are helpful for anyone who experiences a strong urge to urinate and thinks they may not make it to the toilet in time. They are also appropriate for people who urinate more than 8x/day. If you are someone who urinates too frequently, your physical therapist may work with you to retrain your bladder so that it can go longer periods before sending signals to your brain that it is time to pee. Your physical therapist may provide you with a voiding schedule, where you are only to use the restroom at set times. When you have a strong urge to pee between the set times, you would utilize the following techniques until your next scheduled voiding time. The schedule will be modified, and the intervals lengthened over time, until the goal is met.

- When the urge to use the bathroom occurs, stop what you are doing and sit down. Sitting down puts pressure on the perineum (the area between your vagina and anus) which helps to calm the bladder. If you are unable to sit down, stand very still. DO NOT rush to the bathroom!
- Remain calm and take deep breaths. Try to relax and do not become overly anxious about making it to the bathroom in time. Think happy thoughts.
- Perform pelvic floor muscle contractions (6 quick, strong contractions OR 3 10-second holds). This activates the Voluntary Urinary Inhibition Reflex (VUIR) which calms the bladder to reduce the urge. If you have overactive pelvic floor muscles, your physical therapist may instruct you to avoid this technique.
- Performing 10 calf raises can trigger the same reflex by indirectly engaging the pelvic floor through shared spinal nerve pathways.
- Think about something else to distract you – Make up a grocery or shopping list. Focus on your “to do” list for the day. Count by 7’s. Check your email or social media.
- Wait until the urge subsides before SLOWLY walking to the bathroom. If you are on a voiding schedule, try to wait until the next set voiding time.
- You may need to repeat these techniques multiple times on your way to the bathroom, depending on how far away it is.