

Emptying your bladder after you have a baby

After you have your baby, you might have trouble emptying your bladder. Or you might notice changes to your need to pass urine (wee). When your bladder doesn't empty properly, leftover urine can build up over time. This is known as urinary retention.

The birth of a baby can put pressure on your bladder, as well as the muscles and ligaments that support your bladder, uterus (womb), and bowel. This is called your pelvic floor.

The pressure can cause swelling, bruising, or pain in the pelvic and tummy area, especially around the tube that takes urine from your body (urethra).

This can make it difficult to wee and may lead to urinary retention. Urinary retention can stretch and damage your bladder.

Signs of urinary retention include:

- pain or discomfort in your bladder
- not feeling the urge or need to wee
- difficulty weeing
- feeling like your bladder isn't emptying completely
- weeing slowly or starting and stopping while weeing
- needing to push or strain to wee
- leaking urine when your bladder is too full.

How to keep your bladder healthy

Drink plenty of fluids

After having a baby, you need to drink 1.5 to 2 litres of fluid every day. That's about 8 cups. If you don't drink enough it can irritate your bladder and make your symptoms worse.

Spread your drinks out over your day. That way you won't suddenly overfill your bladder.

Avoid drinking lots of tea, coffee, and cola soft drinks. They contain caffeine which can make your symptoms worse.

Go to the toilet regularly

Go to the toilet every 2 to 3 hours so your bladder doesn't get too full. Don't strain when you wee or poo.

The best position to sit on the toilet is:

- leaning forward with your feet flat on a low stool
- legs wide apart with your elbows on your thighs
- relax your tummy
- sit down on the toilet seat, don't hover over it
- stay relaxed and breathe evenly
- take your time, don't rush.



Tips to help you empty your bladder

- If you feel your bladder hasn't completely emptied, rock your pelvis backwards and forwards while sitting on the toilet seat. Then try again.
Or stand up, rock your pelvis backwards and forwards, then sit down and try again.
- Press gently above your pubic bone over your bladder.
- Wee in a warm shower.
- Turn on a tap. The sound of running water can help.
- Place your hand in cold water as you empty your bladder.

Talk with your midwife or doctor about pain medicine if pain is stopping you from emptying your bladder.

Strengthen your pelvic floor muscles

Your pelvic floor muscles help your bladder work properly, so it's important you do your pelvic floor exercises every day. Make sure you can feel your pelvic floor muscles relax after each exercise.

For more information read our fact sheet on pelvic floor exercises.

Do you need an interpreter?



You can ask for an interpreter if you need one.

Family Violence Support

1800 Respect National Helpline

You can get help if you have experienced sexual assault, domestic or family violence and abuse.

You can call any time of day or night.

1800 737 732 (24-hour support service)

1800respect.org.au

For more information

Royal Women's Hospital

Physiotherapy Department
Level 1, Royal Women's Hospital
20 Flemington Rd
Parkville Vic 3052
T: (03) 8345 3160
Monday to Friday 8.00am – 4.30pm

Pelvic floor exercises

thewomens.org.au/health-information/fact-sheets#pelvic-floor-exercises