TIMED VOIDING or.............MIND OVER BLADDER

Bladder retraining can break old habits of frequent voiding and decrease urgency. The goal is to have the woman void every 3–4 hours with less urgency. The rationale is to regain cortical control over the detrusor muscle of the bladder. In a way it is similar to toilet training a young child who must be taught to void on demand. Voiding on demand lets the woman regain voluntary control of the bladder, rather than it controlling the woman.

A toileting schedule works best when adjusted to and based on the woman’s individual pattern. A voiding diary is done and voiding should be based on the smallest time interval between voids, obtained from the bladder diary, or every two hours. The woman is instructed to void by the clock rather than when she has the urge. This was originally found helpful when dealing with urge incontinence and frequency symptoms. Recent research suggests that a timed voiding interval schedule can also be helpful in treating stress incontinence.

The instructions are pretty simple. The woman instructed go to the bathroom and empty her bladder at scheduled times. First, assess what her previous pattern was. A voiding diary is a great was to evaluate this. Next, average the interval between her daily voidings. Timed voiding can be best accomplished during the day, it is unrealistic to expect the woman to time her patterns at night. Have her void by this schedule for 3 days. It is imperative that she void regardless of her desire to urinate. If she is able to maintain this prescribed schedule, increase the voiding intervals by 15-30 minutes. Once she has been successful with the new schedule for 3 – 7 days, gradually increase the voiding intervals by 15 to 30 minutes until a maximum of every 2.5 to 4 hours is reached. Reinforcement in terms of praise is very helpful.

The amount she voids is irrelevant. It must be emphasized that in order for this technique to be successful, she should try very hard not to go to the bathroom between scheduled times. Use of urge avoidance or suppression techniques is very helpful. Warn her that she may leak during the initial training period. Reassure her that it is okay, and even expected during the initial training period. Understand however that she may be quite upset by it. It may be necessary at time to back tract to the previous voiding schedule if urgency occur before the prescribed time interval. For example, if urinary urgency occurs after 3 hours, instruct the woman to void every 2.5 hours instead.

It is hoped that at the end of this training period, voluntary, repetitive efforts to suppress and induce bladder activity may improve cortical voluntary control and thus improve the woman’s symptoms.

GOAL: To void every 3-4 hours, with decreased urgency.