

# Patient information

## Pelvic Floor Service The 'Holding on' Programme

If you feel that you need to rush to the toilet to open your bowels, you may benefit from retrain your bowels and gain confidence. This exercise helps you gain confidence and hold on for longer than 10 minutes, giving you more time to find a toilet.

### Next time when you need to have your bowels open:

- Stage 1(hold on a toilet):
  - Sit on the toilet and hold on for 1 minute before opening your bowel. Do not forget to take a watch / timer in with you! Over time, increase from 1 minute to 5 minutes. When you are able to delay opening your bowels for 5 minutes keep the exercise for several days. When you feel confident, increase the time gradually to 10 min. This stage is harder but remember you are on the toilet, and therefore 'safe'. It may be helpful to take something to read with you.
- Stage 2 ( hold on next to a toilet):
  - Once you are able to delay opening your bowel for 10 minutes whilst sitting on the toilet, now is the time to start sitting next to the toilet rather than on the toilet. Therefore, the next time you want to open your bowel sit near the toilet, either on the edge of the bath or on a chair inside or just outside the toilet area. Now, hold on for 5 minutes and once you are confident, gradually increase the time next to the toilet to 10 minutes.
- Stage 3 ( hold on away from the toilet):
  - When you are able to delay opening your bowel for 10 minutes whilst off the toilet you should now gradually move further away. As your muscles are now stronger you should be able to hold on for 10 minutes in another part of the house. Over the time you will feel more confident, and you will be able to practice this outside the house.

Slowly you will find that you can increase the distance and the time away from the toilet. This may take some time to master but with consistence and perseverance it will happen soon.

### Sources of information

Norton, C. and Chelvanayagam, S. (2004) Bowel Continence Nursing, Beaconsfield: Beaconsfield Publishers Ltd, Chapter 12, p.118, Table 12:2

Poole Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

### Important information

This patient information is for guidance purposes only and is not provided to replace professional clinical advice from a qualified practitioner.

## Your comments

We are always interested to hear your views about our leaflets. If you have any comments, please contact the Patient Experience Team – Tel: 0300 131 4731 (direct dial) or by email at: [esh-tr.patientexperience@nhs.net](mailto:esh-tr.patientexperience@nhs.net)

## Hand hygiene

The trust is committed to maintaining a clean, safe environment. Hand hygiene is very important in controlling infection. Alcohol gel is widely available at the patient bedside for staff use and at the entrance of each clinical area for visitors to clean their hands before and after entering.

## Other formats

**If you require any of the Trust leaflets in alternative formats, such as large print or alternative languages, please contact the Equality and Human Rights Department.**

**Tel: 0300 131 4434 Email: [esh-tr.Accessibleinformation@nhs.net](mailto:esh-tr.Accessibleinformation@nhs.net)**

After reading this information are there any questions you would like to ask? Please list below and ask your nurse or doctor.

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## Reference

East Sussex pelvic floor service

Next review date: April 2025  
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