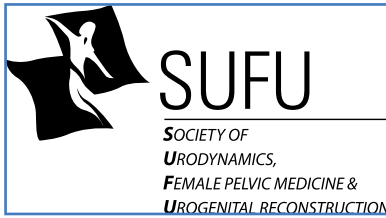
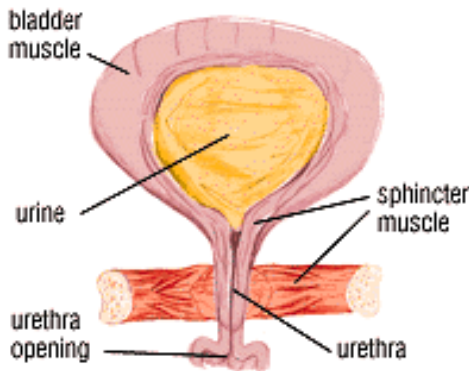


CHANGES YOU CAN MAKE TO IMPROVE BLADDER PROBLEMS



The SUFU Foundation OAB Clinical Care Path Way
For more information on better bladder control visit:
<http://sufuorg.com/oab>

HEALTHY BLADDER HABITS



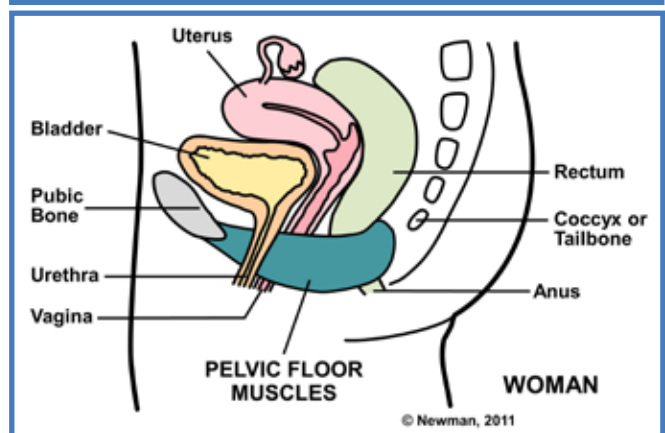
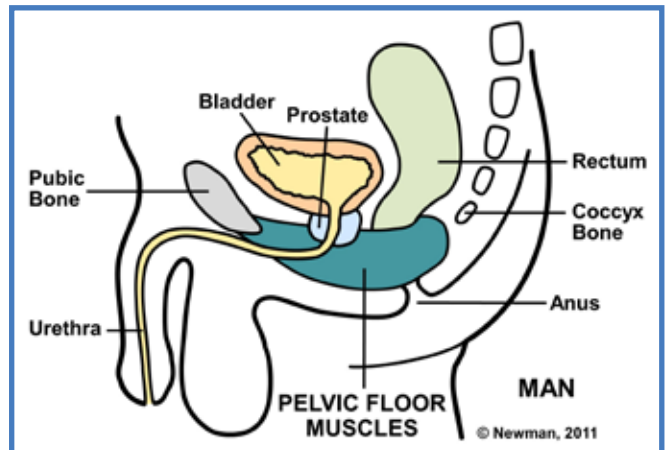
A part of your body called the **lower urinary tract** is at work when you urinate. This tract is made up of your bladder, urethra, and the muscles that support them.

Your **bladder** is a hollow sac of muscle that stores the urine your body makes. When it's empty, it looks like a deflated balloon or could be flat like a pancake. As it fills with urine, it looks more like a round ball.

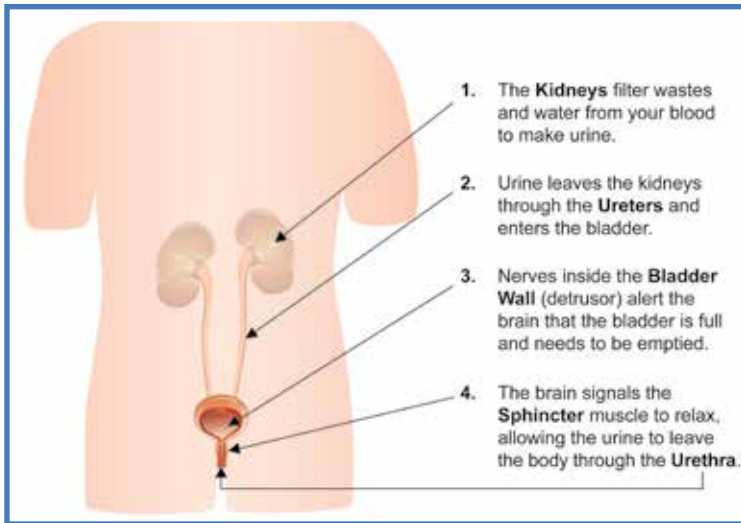
Your **urethra** is a narrow tube that connects your bladder to the outside of your body. In women, the urethra is about 1½ inches long. In men, the urethra is about 8 inches long.

Your **sphincter muscle** is at the bottom of your bladder. Its job is to keep your urethra closed so you don't leak urine. It works like a valve and stays closed until you decide to urinate.

Your **pelvic floor muscles** are a group of muscles that support your bladder and help control the bladder opening. They attach to your pelvic bone and go around the rectum. These muscles form a sling or hammock that supports your pelvic organs (bladder, rectum, in women the uterus, in men the prostate). If the muscles weaken, the organs they support may change position. When this happens, you may have problems with urine leakage and other signs of overactive bladder (OAB) like urgency and frequency. That's why it's important to keep these muscles strong so they can properly support your pelvic organs. You can do this by exercising them regularly.



HOW YOUR BLADDER WORKS



Your bladder has two jobs: 1) to store urine and 2) to empty urine.

Normally, your bladder is relaxed as it fills with urine. A healthy bladder can comfortably hold about 2 cups of urine. As your bladder fills up, it sends messages to your brain telling you that it's time to urinate. This usually happens when your bladder is about half full. This "urge to urinate" is normal and is different from "urgency." Urgency is a sudden and strong need to urinate that is difficult, or sometimes even impossible, to put off.

When it is time to urinate, the sphincter muscle and other pelvic floor muscles relax while the bladder contracts. This combination causes the flow of urine to begin. You don't have to push down or strain to make this happen. Just relax and let your bladder do its job.

TIPS TO KEEP HEALTHY BLADDER HABITS

- Go to the bathroom every 3-4 hours during the day. If you go too often, it may actually reduce the amount of urine that your bladder can hold. But not going often enough may stretch your bladder and make it harder for it to work the right way.
- Urinate in a relaxed and private place. If you're worried or tense, you may find it more difficult to empty your bladder.
- Sit down on the toilet seat rather than 'hovering' over it. Sitting relaxes your pelvic floor muscles. This makes it easier to completely empty your bladder.
- Sit with your feet flat on the floor. If your feet dangle, place a book or stool under your feet for support.
- **Relax your pelvic floor muscles** to start your urine stream.
- Breathe gently as you urinate. Avoid bearing down or straining to start your urine stream.
- **Do not** push down on your bladder with your hands to help you urinate. Just relax and let your bladder do its job.
- Keep your stomach and pelvic floor muscles relaxed until your bladder empties completely.
- Take your time. Allow your bladder to empty completely before getting off the toilet.