

## **Top Tips to Prevent and Manage Urinary Incontinence:**

### **Pelvic Floor strengthening**

Your pelvic floor muscles contribute to your bladder and bowel control, complete your pelvic floor muscle strengthening exercises every day to aid the prevention of urinary incontinence. Current clinical guidelines recommend at least 3 months of PFM exercises as a first line treatment for urinary incontinence.

### **The 'Knack'**

Try to prevent any leakage by engaging your pelvic floor muscles before you put them under any pressure such as when lifting, coughing or sneezing.

### **Drinking Habits**

Aim to drink approx. 1.5/2 litre of fluid per day, you will obviously need more fluid in hot temperatures and when exercising.

Caffeine can irritate your bladder therefore it may affect the number of times you need to urinate. You may be advised to gradually reduce the amount of caffeine that you drink. Fizzy drinks have been found to have a similar effect to caffeine; it is a good idea to replace these drinks with water, herbal/fruit teas or decaffeinated drinks.

### **Weight**

Being overweight can put an extra strain on your pelvic floor muscles. Your leakage may improve if you loose weight.

### **Constipation**

Straining to empty your bowels when constipated can stretch the supporting structures within the pelvic floor; this can weaken them and lead to urinary leakage.

If you have constipation it may help to change your diet and lifestyle. Specific sitting positions when emptying your bowels will also help, your specialist physiotherapist can give you the necessary information.

### **Lifting**

Lifting heavy items can put a strain on your pelvic floor muscles; if possible try to avoid heavy/repetitive lifting. With any lifting try to tighten your pelvic floor muscles (the Knack) before and during the lift and ensure that you do not hold your breath.

**\*\* A specialist women's health physiotherapist can assess how well your pelvic floor muscles are working, they can teach you how to engage your pelvic floor muscles and prescribe a specific exercise programme if needed\*\***