

Urinary Continence: Self Care for Women



KAISER PERMANENTE

TPMG Santa Rosa

Dietary & Behavioral Modifications for Urinary Incontinence

Diet & Daily Habits:

Can this affect your bladder control?

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There is no “diet” to cure incontinence. However, there are certain dietary matters you should know about.

Many people who have bladder control problems reduce the amount of liquids they drink in the hope that they will need to urinate less often. While less liquid through the mouth does result in less liquid in the form of urine, the smaller amount of urine may be more highly concentrated thus, irritating to the bladder surface. Highly concentrated (dark, yellow, strong-smelling) urine may cause you to go to the bathroom more frequently. It also encourages growth of bacteria. And when bacteria begin to grow, infection sets in, and incontinence may be the result. Do not restrict fluids to control incontinence without the advice of your physician. Always follow your doctor’s instructions.

Some foods cause urine to smell bad or peculiar. The most notable of these foods is asparagus. Some other foods may affect the way your urine smells. Another cause of foul-smelling urine, and the most dangerous cause, is urinary tract infection. If you notice that your urine has a strong odor and you have not eaten any foods that would cause this, you should see a physician and have a specimen of your urine tested for infection.

Some medicines may cause your urine to be discolored or have an unusual odor. Some are medicines that you take for bladder inflammation or for urine tests. Others you take for separate health conditions. If your urine has a peculiar color or odor, consult the pharmacist who filled your prescription.

Some foods and beverages are thought to contribute to bladder leakage. Their effect on the bladder is not always understood, but you may want to see if eliminating one or all of the items listed improves your urine control.

COMMON BLADDER IRRITANTS:

- Alcoholic beverages
- Beer
- Wine
- Carbonated beverages
- Soft drinks with caffeine
- Milk/milk products
- Coffee (even decaffeinated)
- Tea
- Medicines with caffeine
- Citrus juice & fruits
- Tomatoes
- Tomato-based products
- Highly spices foods
- Sugar
- Honey
- Chocolate
- Corn syrup
 - Artificial sweetener

Grape juice, cranberry juice, cherry juice, and apple juice are most quenchers that usually are not irritating to a normal bladder. Cranberry juice (or cranberry tablets) and cherry juice may help control urine odor. The best beverage is water. A very thin slice of lemon (not enough citrus juice to irritate the bladder) may improve the taste of water enough that you will find it enjoyable.

Pelvic muscle exercises are recommended to help women maintain bladder control throughout their lifetime. NAFC has a one-page explanation of these exercises and an audio cassette and booklet for further coaching. Women are subject to irritation of the lower urinary system, because the urethra (tube from the bladder to the outside of the body) is very short.

They should avoid nylon underpants and pantyhose next to their body. Cotton underpants are preferable. Women should avoid colored and perfumed toilet tissue and sanitary napkins because the dyes and perfumes may be irritating. They should not use detergent bath additives. Some urologists suggest that women never sit in a bathtub and always take a shower. If you have symptoms that feel like infection such as, bladder pain, urgency, and frequency; but your doctor says you do not have an infection, you should see a specialist. The information in this leaflet is directed to people with bladder leakage, not to people whose main problem is irritative voiding symptom. Constipation could be a cause of your bladder control problems. When the rectum is full of stool, it may disturb the bladder and cause the sensation of urgency and frequency. If you have a history of constipation or have recently become constipated, see your physician. Constipation may

be caused by the medicines you are taking, a “sluggish bowel,” or other conditions. Most people in Western society should add more bulk to their diet in the form of a high-fiber diet, fiber additives, or bulking agents. Discuss your need for fiber with your doctor, pharmacist, or a nutritionist. When you add fiber to your diet, it is important that you not restrict fluids. Also, you may note that you feel bloated and have gas in the beginning. This discomfort will be temporary. **Any change in bowel habits should be reported to your physician. A change in bowel habits is one of the seven danger signals listed by the American Cancer Society.**

Obesity is a dangerous health problem. It also contributes to incontinence in females. Some women notice improved bladder control when they lose weight.

Cigarette smoking is irritating to the bladder surface. Smoking is also associated with bladder cancer. Coughing associated with smoking may lead to stress incontinence during coughing spasms. You should stop smoking today for these and many other reasons.

In older people and people limited by arthritis or other disabilities, it is important to:

1. Use the toilet regularly—every 2 1/2 to 3 1/2 hours.
2. Wear clothes that are easy to get off when it is time to go to the toilet.
3. Remain on the toilet until your bladder is empty. If you feel there is still some urine in the bladder, stand up and then sit back down again and lean forward slightly over the knees. This is called “double voiding” and may help you empty your bladder.
4. Make the toilet facilities convenient. This may mean a bedside commode, bedpan, or urinal placed conveniently near or in the bed.

5. Empty your bladder before you start on a journey of an hour or more. Don't try to "wait until I get home to my own bathroom."

Caffeine Content in Foods and Beverages (Caffeine Content in Milligrams)

BEVERAGES	
• Carbonated Beverages:	
Cherry Coca-Cola – 8 fl. oz.	31
Cherry RC – 12 fl. oz.	12
Coca-Cola – 8 oz.	31
Cola – 12 fl. oz.	37
Draft Cola, Royal Crown – 12 fl. oz.	43
Dr. Pepper – 12 fl. oz.	38
Fresca – 12 fl. oz.	0
Hire Root Beer	0
Kick – 12 fl. oz.	58
Maxxum Cola, Nehi – 12 fl. oz.	70
Mello Yello – 8 fl. oz.	35
Mountain Dew – 12 fl. oz.	55
Mr. Pibb – 8 fl. oz.	27
Orange sodas – 12 fl. oz.	0
Pepper type – 12 fl. oz.	37
Pepsi – 12 fl. oz.	37
Pepsi, wild cherry – 12 fl. oz.	38
RC Cola – 12 fl. oz.	43
7-Up – 12 fl. oz.	0
Slice: Cherry Spice – 12 fl. oz.	35
Cola – 12 fl. oz.	11
Red – 12 fl. oz.	34
Shasta Cola – 12 fl. oz.	42
Sprite – 12 fl. oz.	0
• Carbonated Beverages (low calorie):	
Diet Cherry Coca-Cola – 8 fl. oz.	31
Diet Coke – 8 fl. oz.	31
Diet cola, aspartame sweetened – 12 fl. oz.	50

MILK, MILK BEVERAGES, MILK MIXES, AND YOGURT	
Chocolate Dairy Drink with aspartame, from mix, prep with water ¼ oz pkt in 4 oz. water and 3 ice cubes	22
CANDY AND GUM	
After Eight Mints, 2 mints	2
Baby Ruth	2
Butterfinger	2
Choc., baking, 1 oz.	35
Choc. Chips, semi-sweet, 1 cup	104
Chocolate coated:	
Peanuts, 10 pieces	9
Peanuts, Goobers 1.38 oz. pkg.	9
Raisins, 10 pieces	5
Raisins, Raisinettes, 1.58 oz. pkg.	11
Choc., semi-sweet, 1 oz.	18
Choc., sweet, dark, 1.45 oz. ar	27
Special dark, Hershey, 1.5 oz. bar	31
Chunky, 1.4 oz. bar	12
Golden Almond:	
Hershey, 3.2 oz. bar	16
III, Hershey, 3.2 oz. bar	15
Solitaires with almonds, Hershey, 3 oz. pkg.	14
Hundred Grand, 1.5 oz. bar	11
Kit Kat Wafer, Hershey 1.5 oz. bar	5
Krackel choc. Bar, Hershey, 1.5 oz. bar	7
Milk chocolate, 1.55 oz. bar	11
With almonds, 1.55 oz. bar	10
With rice cereal, 1.45 oz. bar	9
Milk chocolate chips, 1 cup	43
Mr. Goodbar, Hershey, 1.75 oz. bar	5

Diet cola, sodium saccharin sweetened	39
Diet Kick Citrus – 12 fl. oz.	58
Diet Mello Yello – 8 fl. oz.	35
Diet Mountain Dew – 12 fl. oz.	55
Diet Mr. Pibb – 8 fl. oz.	27
Diet Pepsi – 12 fl. oz.	36
Diet RC – 12 fl. oz.	48
Diet Rite Cola – 12 fl. oz.	48
Diet 7-Up – 12 fl. oz.	0
Tab – 8 fl. oz.	31
• Coffee/Cocoa:	
Cocoa, 5 oz.	13
Drip , 5 oz.	146
Espresso	350
Ground, Folgers – 1 T.	59
Instant powder – 1 rd. t.	57
Instant powder – cappuccino flavor, sugar sweetened, 2 rd. t.	73
Instant powder- decaffeinated, 1 rd. t.	2
Instant powder – French flavor, sugar sweetened, 2 rd. t.	51
Instant powder- mocha flavor, sugar sweetened, 2 rd. t.	33
Instant powder – with chicory, 1 rd t.	37
Percolated, 5 oz.	110
• Tea:	
1 minute brew, tea bag, 5 oz.	28
5 minute brew, tea bag, 5 oz.	46
Canned ice tea, 12 oz.	29
Loose tea, 5 minute brew	40
Prepared from instant powder, 1 t. powder	31
Prepared from instant powder with lemon flavor, 1 rd. t.	26
Prepared from instant powder with sodium saccharin & lemon flavor, 2 t.	36
Prepared from instant powder with sugar and lemon flavor, 3 rd t.	28

Peanut Butter Cups, Reese's, 2 pieces	6
Rolo caramels with mild chocolate, Hershey, 9 pieces	4
Turtles, Demet's, .6 oz. piece	1
Twix, caramel, 2 oz. pkg.	2
DESSERTS	
• Frozen Desserts:	
Ice cream, chocolate, ½ cup	2
• Granola, Cereal, and Snack Bars:	
Peanut butter, soft with chocolate coating, 1.3 oz. bar	2
• Puddings, Custards, & Pie Fillings:	
Chocolate, 5 oz. can	7
• Sauces, Syrups, & Toppings for Desserts:	
Chocolate fudge topping, 1 T.	2
Chocolate syrup, 2 T.	5
MEDICATIONS	
• Non-prescription drugs (per tablet):	
No-Doz Tablets	200
Vivarin Tablets	200
• Pain Relievers (per tablet):	
Excedrin	65
Midol	60
• Others (per tablet):	
BC Powder, Arthritis Strength	38
Vanquish	33

Adapted from Pennington, J. Food Values of Portions Commonly Used, 17th Ed. (1998) and Arky, R. PDR for Nonprescription Drugs (1998)

OTHER TIPS FOR MANAGING INCONTINENCE

There are some key dietary principles to follow to help manage incontinence.

These principles include the following:

Avoid Bladder Irritants, such as:

- Caffeinated beverages (coffee (*limit decaffeinated coffee as well*), tea, cocoa and chocolate, soft drinks)
- Carbonated drinks
- Alcohol
- Acidic foods (citrus fruit and juices (lemon, lime, grapefruit, etc), cranberry juice, tomatoes)
- Spicy foods
- Artificial sweeteners

(Irritants can vary from person to person. To help determine which substances are irritating, you may want to write down everything you eat to find out which substances trigger problems. For example, the items listed above as well as other foods such as brewers yeast, cheese, liver, yogurt and grapes are foods that affect some people yet not others).

Prevent Constipation

- Drink plenty of fluids
- Increase your fiber intake by eating more fruits, vegetables, legumes, and whole grain products. Consider adding some fiber supplements (Metamucil, FiberCon, etc) to your diet.
- Increase physical activity such as walking.

Achieve/Maintain Healthy Body Weight

- check with your healthcare provider if you have questions

Review Your Medications with Your Physician to identify potential bladder irritants

- Blood pressure medicines, sleeping pills and water pills may contribute to incontinence

Remember Your Kegels!

Calm Period is the Best Time to Void

Don't Smoke!!

Pelvic Floor Exercises

PELVIC FLOOR EXERCISES

1. Take a couple deep breaths, slowly let all the air out. Feel all the tension leave your body. Continue breathing at your usual rate while doing these exercises. Holding your breath while doing the exercises causes an increase in abdominal pressure that is counterproductive.
2. Relax your buttock muscles, abdominal muscles, and the muscles of your inner thighs. Contracting these muscles will not strengthen your pelvic floor. Gently rest your hands on your lower abdomen. This will let you feel your normal breathing rate.
3. Picture your pelvic floor area as the number "8". The bottom circle is around the rectum and anus. The top circle is around the urethra and vagina.

EXERCISE #1

Sustained Contractions – Begin by squeezing the rectal/anal circle as if to pinch off stool during a bowel movement. Proceed on upward to include the top circle to squeeze the urethra and vagina. Contract these muscles inward and upward. Hold a strong contraction for 5 seconds (levels I and II) or for 10 seconds (levels III and IV) while you continue to breathe naturally then slowly release the contraction. Rest 10 seconds. Repeat this exercise 15 times resting between repeats.

EXERCISE #2

Rapid Contractions – This exercise is the same as #1 except it is a short rapid contraction of the pelvic floor muscles. You quickly contract-relax, contract-relax,

contract-relax, (about one second for each contract-relax) ... for 5 seconds (levels I and II) or for 10 seconds (levels III and IV). Rest for 10 seconds. This is one cycle. Repeat the cycle again a total of 15 times. If you can not feel your pelvic floor muscles relax after 5 seconds of contract-relax, then start with 2-3 seconds of contract-relax. Still rest for 10 seconds.

Exercise Progression

LEVEL I

- Begin lying down.
- Perform exercises #1 and #2 as described above.
- Do level I two times per day. This will take about 7 ½ minutes each time.
- This will add up to 180 pelvic floor contractions per day.

LEVEL II

- Same as level I, but in sitting, again two times per day.
- Progress to level III when you feel you can comfortably complete level II.

LEVEL III

- Do in sitting, increase as follows:
- Exercise #1 – sustained contractions, hold contraction 10 seconds, rest 10 seconds, repeat for a total of 15 times
- Exercise #2 – rapid contractions, contract-relax for 10 seconds, rest for 10 seconds, repeat for a total of 15 times.

- Do level III, two times per day. This will take about 10 minutes each time.
- This will add up to 330 pelvic floor contractions per day.
- Progress to level IV when you feel you can comfortably complete level III.

LEVEL IV In addition to doing level III daily, incorporate the pelvic floor Exercise into your daily activities. Do the exercises while standing in your daily activities. Be sure to practice these exercises in standing, both the sustained contractions and the rapid contractions. Learn to contract your pelvic floor muscles before and while lifting, before and while coughing or sneezing (*squeeze when you sneeze*). Do strong rapid contractions when you feel the urge to urinate to help your bladder relax until you are able to walk to the bathroom. Use your pelvic floor muscles to hold urine in and to calm your bladder so that you are in control.

Muscle strengthening takes time. Keep up with the exercises. Keep a bladder diary so that you can see the gains you are making. You will see a decrease in the amount leaking and in the frequency of leaks.

METHODS THAT REDUCE PRESSURE ON THE PELVIC FLOOR

Bending and Lifting

- a. Stand close to the object with your feet slightly apart, one foot just in front of the other
- b. Bend the knees and keep the back straight when lowering to pick the item up
- c. Contract the pelvic floor muscles before you stand up
- d. Hold the item as close to you as possible to reduce stress to your back

Stand from Sitting

- a. Scoot towards the edge of the chair
- b. Place your feet under the edge of the chair
- c. Contract the pelvic floor muscles before you stand up
- d. Push with your hands and stand straight up

Rise from Reclining

- a. Roll over to one side facing edge of bed, lounge, etc
- b. Contract the pelvic floor muscles before you sit up
- c. Lower legs over edge of bed, lounge, etc
- d. Push with hands against bed to lift the body to sitting position
- e. Don't forget to stand up as described above