

BLADDER IRRITANTS/WAYS TO REDUCE BLADDER SYMPTOMS:

1. Diet: Avoid or limit foods or drinks that worsen bladder symptoms. Common triggers: (consider limiting the following to 12-16 oz/d)
 - Tea - sweet and unsweetened
 - Coffee - caf or decaf
 - Alcohol (worsens voiding at night)
 - Chocolate
 - Caffeine or decaf soft drinks
 - Tomato based products
 - Spicy and acidic foods and drinks
 - Artificial sweeteners
 - Even decaf drinks have some caffeine
2. Medications: Over the counter medications and prescription drugs can worsen bladder problems:
 - Excedrin
 - Midol/Advil
 - Anacin
 - Dristan
 - Fluid pills/diuretics
 - Diabetes - good control of blood sugar will reduce bladder symptoms
3. Avoid constipation:
 - Increase fiber (goal: 30 grams/d): beans, oatmeal, prunes, bran, 5-10 servings/d of fresh fruits and vegetables
 - Every morning: 2 tablespoons of mixture: 1 cup apple sauce + 1 cup unprocessed wheat bran $\frac{3}{4}$ + 1 cup prune juice
 - Exercise
 - Over the counter: magnesium 400-800 mg/d, miralax, probiotics
4. Maintain healthy weight: being overweight adds pressure on your bladder causing leaking with activity, cough or sneeze or with urge, 10% weight loss helps a lot
5. Stop smoking/Vaping
6. Drink water: some women who have bladder symptoms reduce their fluid intake so they don't have to pee as often, this may worsen symptoms. A good goal for water intake: 50-80 oz/day, more if you exercise. Minimize drinking large amounts at one time. **Drinking too much water can make you leak!**
7. Reduce peeing at night - avoid/minimize drinking at night especially drinks with caffeine or alcohol. Drink most fluids in the first half of the day, limit fluids after 5 pm.
8. Retrain bladder (use bladder diary)

- Normal frequency: every 2-3 hours, some women leak because they hold their urine too long
- Voiding schedule -use results of your bladder diary to pee at set times, increase by 15 min increments every 3-5 days until you are peeing every 3 hours
- Suppress urge - sit/stand/lay down, relax(tension increases urge) lower abdominal muscles, concentrate on slow deep breathing, kegels 5-10 in a row, once urge decreases walk SLOWLY to bathroom
- Normal voiding: relaxation of your pelvic muscles, some women "push" their urine out and that can cause more bladder symptoms - consciously relax and sit for additional 20-30 seconds

9. Kegel's

- **Find the right muscles.** Identify your pelvic floor muscles by stopping urination in midstream. Once you identify your pelvic floor muscles you can do the exercises in any position, initially it may be easiest to do them lying down. (Don't make a habit of using Kegel exercises to stop your urine stream because doing them frequently while emptying your bladder can lead to difficulty emptying your bladder and that can increase the risk of a urinary tract infection.)
- **Perfect your technique.** To do Kegel's: imagine sitting on a marble and tighten your pelvic muscles as if you're lifting the marble. Hold for 3 sec, relax for 3 sec.
- **Maintain your focus.** For best results, focus on tightening only your pelvic floor muscles. Be careful not to flex the muscles in your thighs or buttocks. Suck in your abs at the same time if you can. Avoid holding your breath.
- **Make Kegel exercises part of your daily routine.** Repeat 2-3x/day, 3 sets of 20 reps/day. You can do Kegel exercises discreetly just about any time, do them at your desk or relaxing on the couch.
- **When to expect results.** If you do Kegel exercises regularly, you can expect results within a few weeks to a few months. **Make Kegel exercises a permanent part of your daily routine to maintain benefit.**

10. Exercise (incorporate pelvic floor exercises in your exercise routine)

- Yoga
- Pilates
- Barre

11. Pelvic floor physical therapy