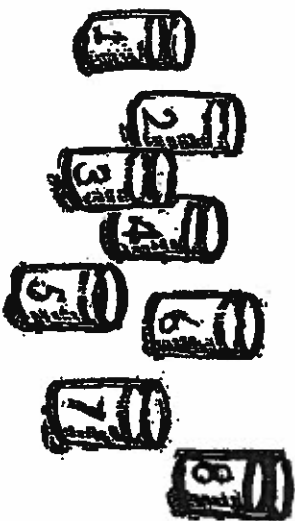


6 Simple Steps for Good Bladder Habits



1. Drink Water

Drinking enough liquids, especially water, keeps urine from getting too strong. Concentrated urine causes bladder irritation, has a foul odor, can cause skin irritation and bladder infections.

- In general, drink 6 – 8 cups of liquid each day.
- At least half of your liquid should be water.
- If you urinate more than 2 times at night, limit your liquids after 7:00 PM but do not cut back on liquids during the day.



2. Avoid Caffeine

Caffeine is a bladder irritant and stimulant, which can cause urgency, frequent urination and increased urine production.

- Eliminating caffeine will help reduce bladder urges.
- Watch out for caffeine in coffee, tea, colas, chocolate and some over the counter cold and allergy medications.
- Gradually reduce your caffeine intake to avoid possible withdrawal symptoms such as headaches or sleepiness.



3. Keep Bowels Regular

Constipation makes bladder symptoms worse, when pressure from the over-filled rectum pushes on the bladder, causing urgency, frequency and incomplete bladder emptying. Straining to empty your bowels may cause damage to your pelvic floor muscles.

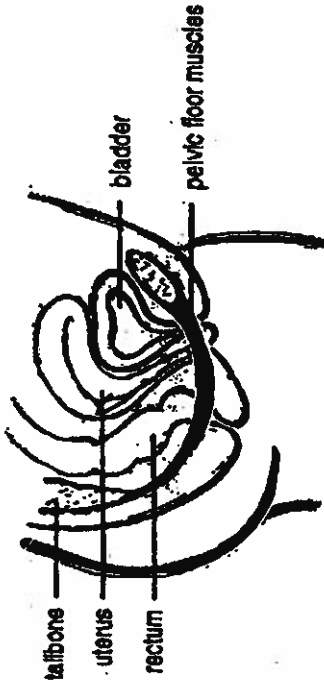
- To promote bowel function, drink enough liquids, get daily exercise (walking is great), eat plenty of high fiber foods and add bran to your diet as needed. Do this gradually and remember to increase fluids at the same time.
- Avoid laxatives and enemas since their regular use decreases the bowel's normal function.



4. Maintain a Regular Bladder Schedule

A regular schedule of bladder emptying can improve urgency, and frequency of urination. Voiding too often or not often enough can cause problems.

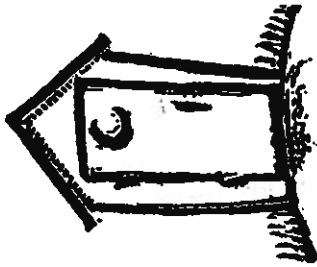
- Empty your bladder every 3 – 4 hours during the day. At night it is normal to get up once to empty your bladder.
- Bladder training helps the bladder hold more urine by gradually increasing the time between emptying your bladder.
- Frequent holding of urine for more than 6 hours can overstretch the bladder and increase the risk of bladder infection.



5. Exercise Pelvic Floor Muscles

The pelvic floor muscles form a sling-like support for the pelvic organs and bladder. Weakened muscles allow urine to leak with physical activity, coughing, sneezing or laughing.

- Pelvic floor muscle exercises (PFME's) are helpful for both urine and fecal incontinence.
- To do a PFME, find the right muscle by tightening around the anus as if you were holding back gas, and continue tightening until the muscles around the vagina also contract.
- Hold the muscle tightness for a count of 10 and relax. Do not tighten your stomach, thighs or buttocks. Breathe normally.
- Do 60 – 80 PFME's a day in sets of 10 tightenings, spaced throughout the day.



6. Control Bladder Urges

Bladder urges are signals that you feel as the bladder stretches to fill with urine. Urges are felt even if the bladder is not completely filled. They are not a command, just a reminder. Bladder urges can be controlled so that you can empty your bladder when it is convenient and not when the urge strikes. To control the urge:

- Stop what you are doing and stand still or sit down.
- Tighten your pelvic floor muscles 5 – 10 times to get rid of the urge.
- Breathe slowly and relax.
- Do other things to take your mind off the urges.
- When you feel the urge again, go to the bathroom.