

Guide on Lifestyle Changes for OAB & UI

Adequate Fluid Intake – Individuals with urinary symptoms often limit fluids so that they will not have to urinate as often. Individuals with urge incontinence and have a high fluid intake (>2,400 ccs/day), may show a reduction in incontinent episodes and voiding frequency by lowering their fluid intake. Incontinent persons with low fluid intakes (<1,500 ccs/day) may benefit from increasing their fluid intake. Reducing fluid intake after 6 pm, and concentrating fluid intake during morning and afternoon hours may decrease nighttime incontinence episodes.

Stop Smoking – Nicotine in cigarettes can be irritating to the bladder muscle causing bladder contractions and urgency. A smoker's repeated and chronic coughing may cause urinary leakage. Smoking cessation may help to decrease urine leakage.

Check your diet and medications

Certain food and beverages can irritate the bladder and make symptoms worse. They are:

- Alcoholic beverages
- beer, wine
- carbonated beverages
- milk/milk products
- soft drinks with caffeine, tea, coffee even decaffeinated
- citrus juices & fruits
- highly spiced foods
- sugar, honey
- corn syrup
- artificial sweetener – Nutrasweet (Equal)

Also some over-the-counter medications and prescription drugs contain caffeine which can worsen bladder problems such as Excedrin, Midol, Anacin, Dristan and Sinarest. Do not stop taking prescription drugs without talking to your healthcare provider.

Maintain a healthy weight - Being overweight can put pressure on your bladder, which may cause leakage of urine when laughing or coughing. If you are overweight, losing some weight can lessen the pressure on your bladder.

Keep your bowels regular– Keeping healthy bowel habits may lessen bladder symptoms. Constipation and difficulty with defecation (straining during bowel movements) causes more pressure on the bladder causing urine leakage. Some suggestions include: 1) increase fiber-rich foods in your diet such as beans, oatmeal, bran cereal, whole wheat bread, fresh fruits and vegetables; 2) exercise such as a daily walk to promote regular bowel movements; 3) drink plenty of nonirritating fluids (water); 4) see your health care provider if you have bowel problems.