

Ways to Prevent Bladder Problems During the Night

As you get older, your heart is not as good at pumping all the blood and fluids through your body. Extra water (called edema) stays in the legs, ankles, and feet. During the night, when you are asleep and lying flat, it is easier for the heart to pump your blood. More blood moves through your kidneys and they produce more urine at night when you are asleep. This is called “nocturnal polyuria.” Because your bladder has to hold more urine, you need to get up more often to void (called nocturia). If you are taking drugs for high blood pressure and heart disease, you may produce even more urine at night.

What Will Help Me Void Less During the Night?

Limit the amount you drink (water, soup, juice, soda) at the end of the day. Stop drinking at least 3 to 4 hours before you go to bed. For example, don't drink after your evening meal, commonly at 6 P.M. But remember to drink at least 2 quarts of fluid during the day. If you have to take medicine before you go to bed, then just do it with sips of water.

Are There Drinks or Foods I Should Avoid?

Drinks that contain caffeine and alcohol can irritate your bladder and they make your kidneys produce more urine. So try not to drink them in the afternoon, and especially not after 6 P.M. Remember, that even decaffeinated drinks (tea, coffee, soda) have some caffeine and should be avoided. Chocolate has caffeine too. If you like chocolate ice cream, pudding, or cake for dessert or a nighttime snack, this may make your nighttime problem worse.

What Else Can I Do?

Try to decrease edema, or swelling of your feet and legs, during the day. This will cause your kidneys to process some of this extra water before you go to bed. It will reduce the load on your bladder during the night.

- Lie down on your left side for 1 ½ to 2 hours in the late afternoon or early evening hours.
- When watching TV or after lunch, prop your legs on top of a pillow that is placed on a stool or chair.
- If you have a large amount of swelling in your legs and feet, speak with your doctor or nurse about the use of support stockings that help improve blood circulation.
- Also, try to empty your bladder at night.
- Try not to use a bedpan or urinal to urinate during the night unless you are afraid of falling on the way to the bathroom. Getting out of bed to urinate will help your bladder empty more completely.