

25 million Americans suffer from treatable bladder control problems. Do you?

- Do you get strong, sudden urges to go to the bathroom?
- Do you have to go to the bathroom 8 or more times a day?
- Have you started wearing pads?
- Do you check out the location of the bathroom wherever you go?
- Have you had an “accident”? Are you afraid you might?
- Do you get up 2 or more times a night to go to the bathroom?

If you answered “yes” to any of these questions, talk to your health care professional.

What You Can Do

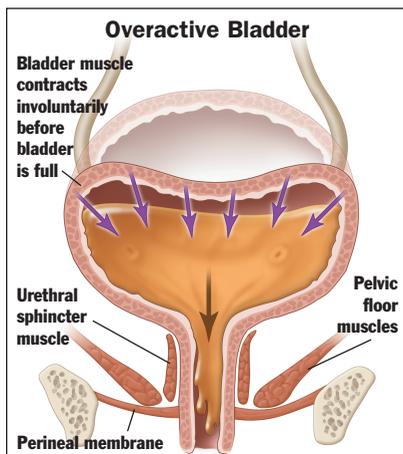
Make Lifestyle Changes

Change Your Diet

Avoid foods that make you go to the bathroom more often, such as:

- Citrus fruit/juices, tomatoes, and spicy foods, which can irritate the bladder
- Alcohol and foods that contain caffeine (cola, coffee, and tea), which cause the body to produce more urine

Drink normal amounts of water (5 to 6 glasses) throughout the day. But avoid drinking 2 hours before bedtime.



An overactive bladder contracts involuntarily and leads to a frequent and urgent need to go to the bathroom, and may cause an “accident.”

Lose Weight

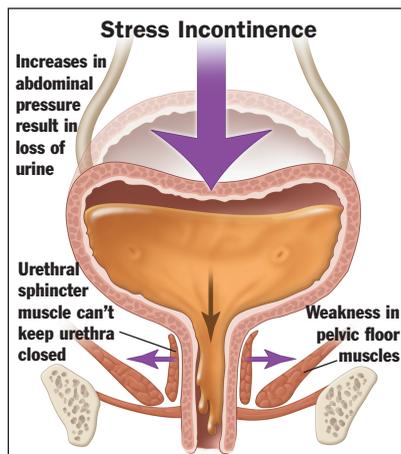
Sometimes extra weight causes bladder control problems.

Quit Smoking

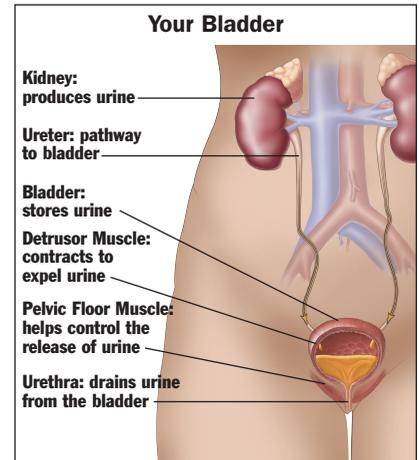
Chronic coughing due to smoking can weaken the pelvic muscles, and nicotine can cause bladder contractions that lead to a greater need to go to the bathroom.

Re-train Your Bladder

You can re-train your bladder muscles to hold urine for longer periods. For example, if you are used to going every 2 hours, try to increase that time to 2½ hours. By following a



Coughing, sneezing and straining put pressure on the bladder—if pelvic floor muscles are weak and the urethral sphincter muscle doesn't close completely, an “accident” happens.



schedule, you can gradually increase the amount of time between bathroom breaks and decrease the number of “accidents.”

Do Pelvic Muscle Exercises (Kegels)

Strengthening your pelvic muscles through daily Kegel exercises can make a big difference to bladder control. First, find the right pelvic muscles to exercise. Imagine that you are urinating, then squeeze as if you are trying to stop the flow of urine—these are the right muscles to use. Be careful not to squeeze your stomach or leg muscles. Next, squeeze the pelvic muscles and try to hold for 10 seconds. Then relax for 10 seconds. Work up to 10 to 15 repeats each time you exercise. Do your Kegel exercises at least 3 times a day.

Get Medical Treatment

Daily medicines help treat and manage bladder problems. Talk to your health care professional.

Sources

1. National Association for Continence. Your Personal Guide to Bladder Health. 2001.
2. Kaschak Newman D, Dzurinko MK. The Urinary Incontinence Sourcebook. Updated. Los Angeles, Calif: Lowell House.