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## Prevention of Bladder Control Problems (Urinary Incontinence) & Bladder Health

How can I prevent bladder control problems?

You can't always prevent bladder control problems such as urinary incontinence (UI), but good habits may keep your bladder as healthy as possible.

### **Follow a healthy eating plan**

Healthy eating may prevent factors that raise your chances of developing UI, such as obesity and diabetes. No direct scientific evidence links nutrition to either improving or making UI worse.

Many people find that alcohol; spicy foods; chocolate; artificial sweeteners; caffeinated, carbonated, and citrus beverages; and high-acid foods such as citrus and tomatoes may contribute to bladder irritation and inflammation, which can sometimes lead to UI. You may want to avoid these foods and drinks for a time to see if your symptoms improve. A dietitian can help you plan meals if you're trying to avoid certain foods that make your UI worse.

### **Drink enough fluids**

Drink enough fluids so that you need to urinate every few hours. Learn what's normal for you and avoid becoming dehydrated. Your urine should be pale yellow if you are drinking enough fluids. Talk with your doctor about how much fluid you should drink based on your size, activity level, and where you live. Water is best. However, if you have [kidney failure](#) or [heart failure](#), you should not drink too much water.

Light colored urine is normal. Deeper yellow urine suggests dehydration. Dark brown or orange urine suggests severe dehydration or liver disease. Urine that is pink suggests blood in the urine or having eaten beets. Odd urine color may also be

caused by eating foods with large amounts of dyes. Drink enough fluids so that you need to urinate every few hours. Your urine should be pale yellow if you are drinking enough fluids.

## **Keep a healthy weight**

If you're overweight, losing weight may improve your UI, and keeping a healthy weight may prevent UI. If you're overweight, talk with a health care professional about how to lose weight by eating healthy and being physically active. Your chances of developing UI and other conditions, like diabetes, increase if you have obesity. Reducing obesity and diabetes may lessen UI, especially in women. Eating healthy to achieve a healthy weight may prevent urinary incontinence.

## **Change your bathroom habits**

Go to the bathroom when you need to go. Often, people hold their urine in because it's not a good time to go to the bathroom. However, regularly holding urine in can wear out your bladder muscles. You're also more likely to develop a [bladder infection](#) if you hold urine in. Bladder infections can cause UI.

Women should try to relax the muscles around their bladder when they urinate to make it easier to go. It's best to sit on the toilet seat or in a full crouching squat. Hovering over a toilet seat to avoid touching it does not allow muscles to fully relax and may result in urine being left in the bladder. Take as much time as needed to urinate and empty your whole bladder.

## **Quit smoking**

If you smoke, stop. Quitting smoking at any age is good for your bladder health and overall health. Smoking raises your chances of developing [stress incontinence](#) because smoking causes coughing. Smoking also causes most cases of [bladder cancer](#). Some people say smoking makes their bladder irritation worse.

## **Avoid constipation**

Constipation can make urinary tract health worse and can lead to UI. To prevent constipation, eat plenty of high-fiber foods such as whole grains, vegetables, and fruits; drink enough water; and be physically active. Medicines that doctors use to

treat UI, such as the antimuscarinics [oxybutynin](#) and [tolterodine](#) have side effects that include constipation.

### **Do pelvic floor muscle exercises**

Your pelvic floor muscles help hold urine in the bladder. Pelvic floor exercises, also called [Kegel exercises](#), can make those muscles stronger and help keep urine from leaking out when you laugh, cough, sneeze, or lift. Both men and women can benefit from pelvic floor muscle exercises.

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