



HOW EXTRA WEIGHT AND DIET CAN AFFECT BLADDER CONTROL

Urinary incontinence (UI) is a very common problem in women—as many as 1 in 3 will deal with it at some point.

The good news is that there are things you can do to reduce the likelihood of developing annoying and embarrassing **bladder control issues**, including managing your weight and avoiding foods that trigger UI.

Information about the risks of carrying extra weight can be confusing, even when it comes from reputable sources. For example, while there is a consensus among medical professionals that being overweight or having obesity increases your risk for a range of conditions—from diabetes to heart disease to arthritis^{1,2}—some studies have shown that carrying a modest amount of extra weight might actually have a protective effect for some women.^{3,4,5,6}

The Link Between Weight and Bladder Leaks

What about when it comes to bladder health? It helps to know more about the anatomy of the pelvic floor to understand why carrying extra weight can put you at increased risk for bladder leaks.

The pelvic floor is a system of muscles, ligaments, and other structures that stretch across the pelvis like a hammock, holding the bladder, urethra, bowel, and uterus firmly in place. Extra weight in the abdomen puts undue stress and pressure on your pelvic organs, including the bladder.

Over time, this excess pressure can stretch out the muscles and other supportive structures that hold up the pelvic organs. When this happens, an organ (like the uterus) can slip out of place and press on the bladder or urethra, causing you to leak urine, especially when you laugh, sneeze, cough, or strain.

The Dish on Nutrish: Certain Foods Can Also Trigger Bladder Leaks

Certain foods and beverages are known to irritate the bladder; if you're prone to leaks, best to avoid these foods:

- **Caffeine**, a diuretic and stimulant that increases urine production
- **Alcohol**, which can increase feelings of urgency to go
- **Carbonated beverages**, which can make overactive bladder worse for some women
- **Medications** that contain caffeine (check labels or ask your doctor)
- **Acidic fruits and juices**, which can irritate the urinary tract
- **Artificial sweeteners**, which are known bladder irritants
- **Chocolate**, a stimulant that can increase feelings of urgency to go

Ways to Avoid Bladder Leaks

Keeping your weight in check and avoiding irritants are two ways to protect bladder health and prevent leaks. Here are more ways:



Drink plenty of water. It's common to drink less when you experience bladder leaks, but this can concentrate urine and make the problem worse.



Do Kegel exercises with biofeedback. These important exercises help strengthen your pelvic floor muscles and your urinary sphincter, which helps you control urination. The PeriCoach Kegel exerciser can help you squeeze the right muscles. It's a biofeedback device you insert vaginally and squeeze against, and it pairs with your smartphone, so you can see your progress in real time! PeriCoach has helped hundreds of women strengthen their pelvic floor muscles for better bladder control, and it can help you, too.



Quit smoking. Heavy smokers are much more likely to develop a chronic cough, which can strain and weaken the pelvic floor over time.



Get constipation under control. Straining during bowel movements puts excessive pressure on the pelvic floor, which can damage muscle and ligaments and lead to bladder leaks.



Stay active. Just 30 minutes of low- to moderate-impact activity per day can help you keep your muscles strong and avoid bladder leaks.



Manage medications. High blood pressure drugs, heart medications, diuretics, and even antihistamines and antidepressants can contribute to bladder leaks. Ask your doctor about any medications you take, including over-the-counter drugs.

Urinary incontinence is a common problem for women, but it's not a normal part of aging. Following these tips can help you prevent leaks, but there's no substitute for seeing your doctor. Schedule a visit if you're experiencing bladder control issues that aren't getting better despite your best efforts.

From the team at PeriCoach, we wish you good health, now and always.

Summary

Urinary incontinence, or UI, (bladder leakage) is a common problem for women, yet it's not a normal part of aging. Carrying extra weight and consuming certain foods and beverages can bring on or worsen UI. Learn tips to avoid bladder leaks.

About PeriCoach

PeriCoach is an FDA-cleared, vaginally insertable Kegel exercise device that guides women through pelvic floor exercises. The device is outfitted with several biofeedback sensors and pairs with most Android or Apple smartphone devices via Bluetooth. Users can see their activity in real time and track their progress over time. Learn more about PeriCoach and hear stories from real women about how PeriCoach has improved their lives.

Sources:

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