



## SELF CARE STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE SYMPTOMS OF INCONTINENCE

Other than making modifications in your diet, consider the following interventions you can try at home.

### Weight Control

Pelvic floor muscle tone weakens with significant weight gain. Losing weight may improve your symptoms of urinary incontinence. In addition, a weight loss program will probably include regular exercise, which may also help your general muscle tone.

### Fiber

Constipation may make urinary incontinence worse. Increasing the fiber in your diet may not only improve your symptoms of constipation, but your urinary symptoms as well. Click on the following link to view information on constipation and/or fiber facts.

### Fluid Intake

A common misconception among those with urinary incontinence is that drinking less water will prevent accidents. In reality, limiting fluid intake may make things worse. The lining of the urethra may become irritated, which may increase leakage. Limiting fluids may also contribute to constipation (see above). On the other hand, excessive fluid intake will make urinary urgency/frequency and incontinence worse. Women participating in weight loss programs such as Weight Watchers may notice worsening symptoms because they are asked to substitute fluid intake for calorie intake. The average recommended daily fluid intake is 6-8 glasses.

If leakage at night is a problem, you may want to eliminate fluid intake after dinner. In addition, you may want to experiment with your caffeine intake. Try substituting decaffeinated beverages for caffeinated beverages altogether. If you are unable, try stopping caffeinated beverages at 5 pm, or 12 noon, and see if your night time symptoms improve. Consider taking your evening medications with sips of water only.

### Edema

Women with edema (swelling) of the lower legs during the day may experience night time voiding because excess fluid from the legs returns to the heart when the person is lying down. This problem may be handled with elevating the legs during an afternoon nap, losing weight, medical grade support hose worn throughout the day, or water pills that are taken 4-6 hours before bedtime to eliminate fluid prior to a nighttime sleep.

### Medications

Some medications act as a diuretic to take fluids from the body. Other medications may cause fluid retention. Check with your physician to see if any of your current medications may be adding to your urinary symptoms. A change in the schedule of your medication may also help your symptoms. For instance, a medication to help control blood pressure may also cause you to urinate more. If your blood pressure medicine is taken at 8 a.m. and 8 p.m., and you are up several times during the night to urinate, or are incontinent at night, your physician may consider a once-a-day medication that might help these symptoms. Alternately, the nighttime dose can be taken 4-6 hours before bedtime to eliminate fluid prior to a nighttime sleep. This will hopefully provide you with a more restful sleep, which will improve your disposition throughout the following day.