

# PELVIC HEALTH HINTS AND TIPS



## STRATEGIES TO STAY HEALTHY

As we age, it's normal to experience certain changes in the way our bodies function, and the way we react to those changes can make a big difference in our bladder and bowel health.

First, though, we need to understand what's normal and what's not – don't accept that certain changes are just an ordinary part of the aging process. Some may be, but others could be signs of an underlying condition that may be treatable with proper medical assistance.

If you notice changes in frequency and urgency or a weakening of your stream – especially if these occur suddenly – see your physician.

## NORMAL BLADDER BEHAVIOR

- Daytime frequency: 5-8 (1 per 3 hours)
- Nighttime frequency: 0-1
- Urine stream should start without delay (never push to start a stream)
- Urine stream should be strong and not spray
- Urine stream should be about 8-10 seconds long, counting “one one-thousand...”
- Urge to pee should not be abnormally strong (you should be able to hold for a little while)
- Urination should feel complete when finished (no dribbling after standing or leaving the bathroom)
- No pain, burning, stinging or cramping
- Never Kegel during urination, this can cause urine retention

## UNDERSTAND WHAT IRRITATES YOUR BLADDER

- Alcohol
- Spicy foods
- Artificial sweeteners
- Citrus and tomato
- Caffeinated drinks
- Carbonated beverages (even sparkling water!)
- Cigarette smoking
- Vitamin C
- Not getting enough water, causing urine to be too concentrated

## LEARN “THE KNACK!”

- Reduce the amount of downward pressure on your pelvic floor to prevent and/or reduce leakage
- Squeeze your pelvic floor muscles before you sneeze
- Contract your pelvic floor muscles before you cough
- Use your deep abdominals to help!



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### URGE SUPPRESSION TECHNIQUES

- Stop and sit down
- Apply pressure to the perineum either directly or by crossing your legs
- Do a few pelvic floor muscle elevations
- Practice diaphragmatic breathing to calm the fight-flight-freeze response
- Mental distraction techniques; such as counting backwards from 100 by 7's or thinking about your favorite time or place
- In general, avoid urinating “just in case”

***If you rush to the toilet, your bladder will contract harder and you will leak before you reach the bathroom. If it is a race between you and your bladder, your bladder will win HANDS DOWN every time!***

### TIPS FOR NOCTURIA (NIGHTTIME URGE)

- Get your fluid in during daytime hours
- Limit fluids for 3 hours prior to bedtime
- Take an afternoon nap
- Elevate your legs and use compression stockings
- Train your bladder to hold by ignoring your urge, try to go back to sleep using calming techniques as described
- Practice diaphragmatic breathing to calm the urge response
- Mental distraction techniques such as counting backwards from 100 by 7's or thinking about your favorite time or place

### BOWEL STRATEGIES

- Along with water and dietary habits, be sure to practice proper pooping habits:
  - Use a footstool
  - Relax your pelvic floor muscles
  - Bear down gently by using your breath (don't strain)
  - Splint at the perineum if needed
  - Find a position that works for you
- If you are incontinent of stool, see your doctor and determine if a pelvic physical therapist can help.



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## TIPS FOR PELVIC ORGAN PROLAPSE

- Understand and avoid increases in intra-abdominal pressure
  - Sneezing, lifting, bearing down, etc.
  - Use “The Knack” before sneezing, lifting, etc.
- Maintain good posture
- Empty your bladder fully by double voiding
- Avoid constipation, use good toilet posture
- Try inversion poses like a supported shoulder stand or lying with legs up against a wall with a cushion under you pelvis to ease heaviness
- See a pelvic floor physical therapist for an individualized home program

## AVOID IRRITANTS AND ALLERGENS

VULVAR IRRITANTS	VULVAR ALLERGENS
Soap, detergents, bubble bath	Fragrances, dyes
Sanitary pads, pad adhesive, tampon string	Semen
Nylon underwear	Benzocaine, neomycin
Secretions, sweat, urine	Chlorhexidine (in K-Y jelly)
Lubricants, spermicides, antifungals	Propylene Glycol, a preservative
Tea tree oil, alcohol, bleach/chemicals on toilet paper	Tea tree oil
Chemicals on clothing, in water	Latex (condoms, diaphragms)
Perfumes, shampoos, talcum powder	Lanolin, nickel

