

Patient's Instructions

Foods that May Irritate the Bladder

Overactive Bladder (OAB), sometimes known as urge incontinence, is a problem that results in a sudden urge to urinate and potentially incontinence as well. There are a number of factors that are known to affect this condition. For instance, volume of fluid intake; the more fluids you drink, the more you will have to urinate. Smoking is a factor as well, as it irritates the bladder muscle and the spasms caused by smoker's cough can result in urine leakage.

It is possible for certain foods to worsen this condition, potentially irritating the bladder or the urinary tract and exacerbating symptoms. The effects of various foods on overactive bladder vary from person to person and requires trial-and-error. The following information describes some foods that may make your symptoms worse.



Tomato products: Tomatoes are an acidic food that can potentially irritate the bladder and worsen the OAB symptoms. Those who are particularly sensitive should also cut out tomato products, such as pasta or pizza sauce, ketchup or salsa.



Coffee or Tea: It can increase bladder activity and may result in exacerbated symptoms; including higher urgency and frequency as well as increased incontinence. Reducing or eliminating caffeine intake, or switching to decaffeinated varieties may result in decreased symptoms. However, it should be noted that even decaf contains some caffeine. Keep that in mind if you are particularly sensitive to caffeine.



Chocolate: Like coffee and tea, a serving of chocolate also contains some caffeine (about ¼ that is found in a cup of coffee). White chocolate usually has no caffeine. Try dark chocolate, which contains more cocoa but might satisfy your craving in smaller amounts.

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Oranges, Limes and Lemons: Like tomatoes, citrus fruits-such as oranges, limes, lemons and grapefruits-contain high amounts of citric acid, which can worsen bladder control. Fruits should still be part of your healthy diet, so try less acidic varieties such as apples or bananas. Because everyone reacts differently to foods, you should experiment to see which fruits cause you more trouble.



Alcoholic Beverages: Along with chocolate and coffee, add adult beverage – beer, wine and liquor – to the list of vices that you may want to limit if you have an overactive bladder. Alcohol can irritate the bladder and affect the signals to the brain that make you aware of bladder overflow.



Carbonated Beverages: The “fizz” in carbonated beverages – such as soft drinks, soda water and energy drinks – can potentially aggravate OAB symptoms. Drinks with both carbonation and caffeine may be extra trouble; as is champagne, which has carbonation and bladder stimulating alcohol.



Spicy Foods: The same foods that make your eyes water and burn your lips can also irritate your bladder. Be wary of spicy peppers and sauces; be extra cautious with spicy salsas, which also contain another food on this list – tomatoes. Again, everyone reacts differently, so before cutting out spicy foods completely you should experiment to see which ones affect you and which ones don't.



Sweeteners: There is some evidence that both artificial and natural sweeteners can increase bladder symptoms. As with other foods, you might not have to cut out sugar

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altogether, but it might be wise to experiment to see if your symptoms lessen when you limit these in your diet.



Processed Foods: Processed foods contain a lot of artificial ingredients; flavoring, preservatives, etc. that can irritate the bladder and worsen the symptoms of OAB. A healthy and balanced diet should target natural and fresh foods, such as vegetables and whole grains. This is especially true for people who have OAB.



Onion: Like spicy and acidic food, onions can cause bladder problems and increase the urge to urinate. Raw onions are the main culprits, so cooking them before you eat them could reduce the adverse effect they may have on the bladder.



Cranberries: Many claim that cranberry juice relieves symptoms of urinary tract infections, but cranberries are acidic and much like tomatoes and citrus fruit, can potentially irritate the bladder and cause urge incontinence. You might be tempted to try cranberry juice for relief, but it may worsen your symptoms. If you are going to take in fluids, water is your best bet.



Balanced Water Intake: Too much fluid will certainly cause you trouble, but too little fluid make your urine more concentrated and acidic and can cause increased need to use the bathroom. Limiting fluid intake can also potentially make you constipated. Your doctor can tell you the right balance but most experts suggest the equivalent of six 8-ounce glasses of water per day and limiting intake of fluids in the evening.