Overactive Bladder Triggers to Avoid

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Food, Drink and Habit Overactive Bladder Triggers

If you have overactive bladder (OAB), you know how important a healthy lifestyle is for your condition. While there is no one specific overactive bladder diet, there are certain foods and beverages that can be avoided and lifestyle modifications that can be made in order to improve the symptoms associated with OAB.

Dehydration

It may sound counterintuitive, but being properly hydrated can help decrease the chances of urinary tract infections, which can trigger OAB symptoms.

However, the American Urogynecologic Society recommends drinking when thirsty as opposed to drinking a specific amount of glasses of water per day. This may be especially helpful for those suffering with OAB, as overhydration can also cause symptoms to occur.

Caffeine

Caffeine causes frequent urination, so it stands to reason that decreasing caffeine intake can also cut down on urge incontinence symptoms.

Studies have shown that cutting intake down to about 100mg of caffeine per day can be helpful in taming symptoms. This is the amount in one cup of coffee — good news for coffee lovers, who don't have to give it up completely!

Caffeine can also be found in teas, sodas, chocolate and energy drinks.

Sodium

Excess sodium can cause fluid retention, which then can cause excessive thirst, so extra fluids will be consumed.

Processed and packaged foods are typically high in sodium, so avoiding them can drastically reduce sodium content. Decreasing the amount of added salt on foods can also help. Making the switch to reduce sodium options and fresh, whole foods is also helpful.

Specific Foods to Avoid

Certain foods are known to exacerbate OAB symptoms:

- Spicy foods are known to irritate the lining of the bladder

- Cranberry juice, which is known to help with urinary tract infections, can actually worsen OAB symptoms due to the acidity, which also irritates the lining of the bladder
- Soda contains caffeine, which is a known irritant, and the carbonation can irritate the bladder
- Acidic foods, including orange juice and tomatoes (and foods that contain tomatoes, such as pasta sauce)
- Artificial sweeteners can cause symptoms in some people
- Sugar and very sweet foods can do the same for some people with OAB

Keep a Bladder Diary

If you're having a hard time pinpointing a food trigger for your symptoms, keep a diary. This means writing down when and what you eat, as well as your urination habits. You can then look at the diary and search for trends.

Kegel's, Your Bladder's Best Friend

Short of avoiding certain foods and not under- and overhydrating, performing Kegel exercises can help strengthen the pelvic floor and help to minimize the symptoms associated with OAB.

Pelvic floor muscles can weaken for a variety of reasons, such as aging and childbirth. For men, the muscles can weaken as a result of prostate surgery.

To perform effective Kegel exercise, simply tighten the pelvic floor muscles. This can be done by pretending that the flow of the urine stream needs to be stopped. Hold this for ten seconds; repeat three to four times and do this four times per day.

Results can be seen in three to six weeks. The pelvic floor muscles respond to exercise just as other muscles respond to exercise, such as the glutes responding to squats and lunges.

As a bonus, Kegel exercise can be performed anywhere and at any time of day. They also have the added benefit of improving the quality of sex.