

BLADDER HEALTH

Patient Fact Sheet

Introduction

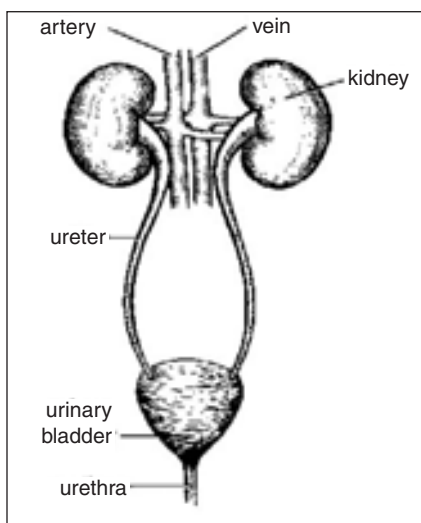
Bladder health is often taken for granted until a urologic condition arises.

Bladder problems can affect people of all ages; however, over 70 percent of the United States adult population may have bladder health concerns. The causes of bladder health issues may vary but the basics of bladder health can be relatively simple.

How Your Bladder Works:

An overview of a normal bladder is essential in understanding bladder health.

The bladder is a hollow muscular organ shaped like a small balloon that sits in your lower abdomen (pelvis) and is held in place by ligaments attached to other organs and the pelvic bones. The kidneys, bean-shaped organs near the middle of the back just below the rib cage, remove urine (excess water and waste products) from the bloodstream. The urine travels down the ureters (two thin tubes) from the kidneys to the bladder. The bladder holds urine until you are ready to go to the bathroom to empty it (urinate). A circular muscle at the base of the bladder called a sphincter normally keeps urine from leaking. From the bladder, the urethra (a single thin tube) which is longer in men than women, passes the urine from the bladder to the toilet. A healthy bladder can hold up to 16 ounces (2 cups) of urine comfortably for two to five hours. Nerves in the bladder trigger a message to your brain and tell you when it's time to urinate.



Signs or Symptoms to Watch for:

The following is a list of signs or symptoms that should alert you that you are having a problem with urinating for which you should seek medical attention.

- Blood in the urine
- A child who complains about problems urinating, whatever the cause
- A need to urinate frequently or urgently
- A sensation of pain or burning during urination
- Cloudy or foul smelling urine (signs of infection)
- Unusual cramps or tenderness in the area of the bladder

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- Feeling unable to empty your bladder over time
- Getting up at night more than once to urinate (nocturia)
- Leaking of urine (incontinence)
- Sudden inability to empty the bladder
- Trauma (car accident, blunt or penetrating injuries)

Bladder Health Tips:

The following are some suggestions about how you can keep your bladder healthy.

- Smoking is the main cause of bladder cancer. Chemicals in tobacco smoke are absorbed by the blood, filtered by the kidneys and stored in the bladder where they can damage the bladder.
- If you smoke, STOP. Smokers are two to three times more likely to develop bladder cancer than non-smokers, and men are three times more likely to be affected by bladder cancer than women. Smoking cessation support groups are available throughout the United States. The ability to stop smoking has been proven to be more effective when a support system is used.
- Maintain proper body weight or try to lose weight if needed. Obesity can contribute to incontinence.
- Exercise at least a few times each week, each time for at least 30 minutes for overall health. If you have been taught how to perform pelvic floor muscle exercises, do them daily.
- Eat a healthy diet including plenty of fruits, vegetables, high fiber carbohydrates, low-fat, low-salt and lean meat meals.
- Avoid constipation because when the rectum is full of stool, it may disturb the bladder causing the feeling of a need to urinate more frequently or more urgently.
- Stay well hydrated! Drink enough liquids each day, six to eight cups of fluid per day, more when the weather is hot or if you are exercising. Water is the best liquid for your bladder.
- If you have a problem with incontinence, don't limit your fluid intake as this can cause concentrated urine, which may further irritate your bladder.
- Don't strain to empty your bladder or bowel. Women should not "hover" above the toilet. If you need to go to the bathroom, go, don't wait!
- Alcohol and beverages that contain caffeine (cola, tea, and coffee) may make your problem worse, as these products can increase bladder activity (urge, frequency and/or incontinence).
- Some foods that are high in acid or sugar content contain artificial sweeteners such as aspartame, or are very spicy and can also cause bladder irritation and an increase in problematic bladder symptoms.

**Most importantly, know when you should get help.
See your healthcare provider whenever you have changes
in urination or bladder habits.**

Donna A. Clar, MBA/MSN, RN, CRRN
SUNA Member



For more information, contact:

Society of Urologic Nurses and Associates
East Holly Avenue Box 56
Pitman, NJ 08071-0056
Phone 888-TAP-SUNA or 856-256-2335
suna@ajj.com
www.suna.org