

# Your Medicines and Bladder Control



**B L A D D E R**

*Let's talk about bladder control for women.  
There's treatment that works.*

**C O N T R O L**

*Let's Talk about Bladder Control for Women* is a public health awareness campaign conducted by the National Kidney and Urologic Diseases Information Clearinghouse (NKUDIC), an information dissemination service of the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK), National Institutes of Health.

**1-800-891-5388**

# Do you have a bladder control problem?

If so, one cause of your problem may be sitting in your medicine cabinet.

Medicines (drugs) can cause people to lose bladder control.

**Do not stop taking any medicine without talking to your doctor.**

If your medicine is causing your bladder problem, your doctor may find another medicine. If you need to keep taking the same medicine, your doctor can help you find another way to regain bladder control.



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Some medicines may cause bladder control problems.

# How does bladder control work?

Your bladder is a muscle shaped like a balloon. While the bladder stores urine, the muscle relaxes. When you go to the bathroom, the bladder muscle tightens to squeeze urine out of the bladder.

Two sphincter (SFINK-tur) muscles surround a tube called the urethra (yoo-REE-thrah). Urine leaves your body through this tube.

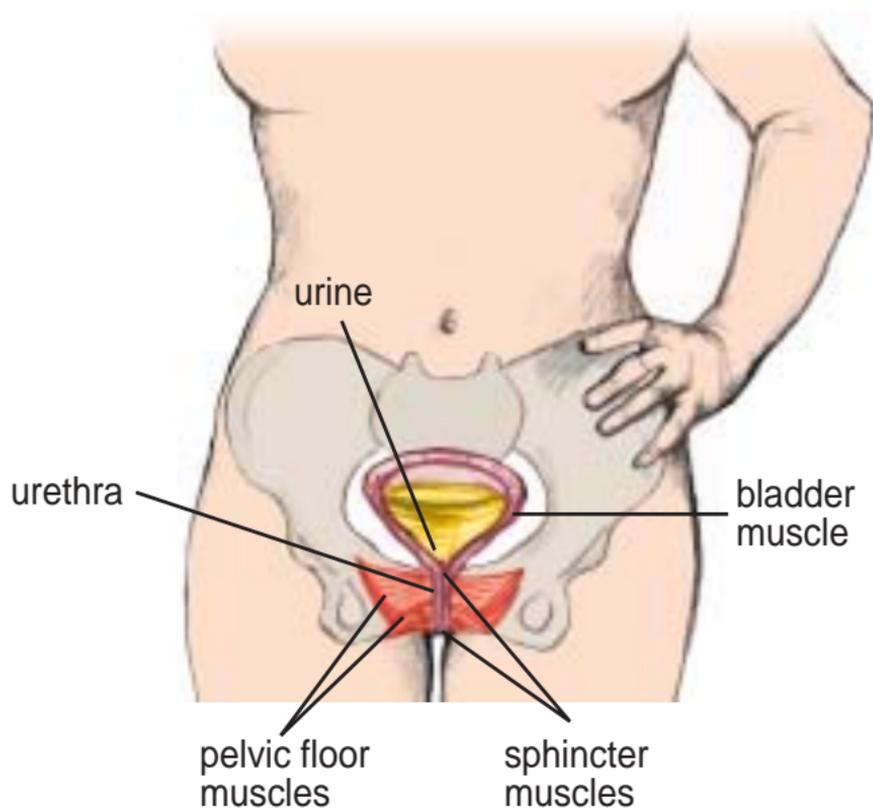
The sphincters keep the urethra closed by squeezing like rubber bands. Pelvic floor muscles under the bladder also help keep the urethra closed.

When the bladder is full, nerves in your bladder signal the brain. That's when you get the urge to go to the bathroom.

Once you reach the toilet, your brain tells the sphincter and pelvic floor muscles to relax. This allows urine to pass through the urethra. The brain signal also tells the bladder to tighten up. This squeezes urine out of the bladder.

Bladder control means you urinate only when you want to. For good bladder control, all parts of your system must work together:

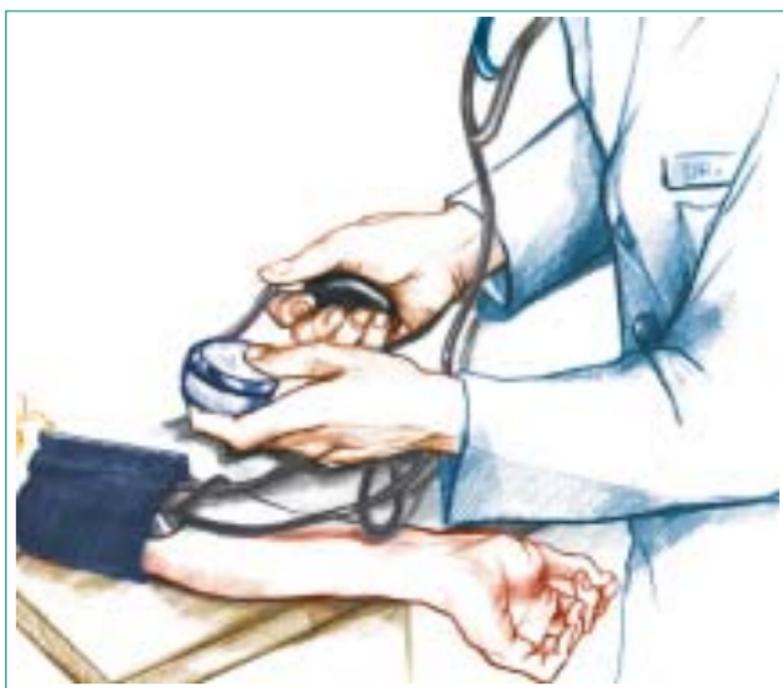
- ✓ Pelvic muscles must hold up the bladder and urethra.
- ✓ Sphincter muscles must open and shut the urethra.
- ✓ Nerves must control the muscles of the bladder and pelvic floor.



Parts of the bladder control system

## How can medicines cause leaking?

Leaking can happen when medicines affect any of these muscles or nerves. For instance, medicines to treat high blood pressure may make the sphincter muscles too tight or too loose. Medicines to treat colds can have the same effect.



Medicines for high blood pressure can cause bladder control problems.

You may take medicine to calm your nerves so that you can sleep or relax. This medicine may dull the nerves in the bladder and keep them from signaling the brain when the bladder is full. Without the message and urge, the bladder overflows. Drinking alcohol can also cause these nerves to fail.



Water pills (diuretics) take fluid from swollen areas of your body and send it to the bladder. This may cause the bladder to leak because it fills more quickly than usual. Caffeine drinks such as coffee and cola have the same effect. Some foods such as chocolate also can cause bladder problems.



Your doctor needs to know what medicines you take.

## What can you do about your bladder control problem?

Before your next doctor visit, make a list of all the prescription medicines you take. Also list medicines you buy without a prescription. Or you can bring all your medicines with you to show the doctor. Ask your doctor if any of the medicines could cause your bladder problem. Your pharmacist can also give you information about your medicines.

You may have to continue taking a medicine that causes a bladder control problem. Ask your doctor to help you find another way to control your bladder.

Other ways might include

- exercises for the muscles that close the bladder
- devices to stimulate the muscles
- training the bladder to hold more urine.

## Points to Remember

- Never stop taking a prescribed medicine without first talking to your doctor.
- Certain medicines, foods, and drinks can cause bladder control problems.
- Make a list of your medicines—both prescription and nonprescription—to show your doctor. Take the list to talk about bladder control.
- You may have to keep taking important medicines, even if they cause some bladder control problems.

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