



WHAT ARE BLADDER IRRITANTS?

Bladder irritants are food, drinks, or medications that affect the bladder. They may “irritate” the bladder and cause it to contract, giving a sense of urinary **urgency** and exacerbating symptoms of **urge or stress incontinence**. The food or drinks listed below can be avoided for a few days, to see if your incontinence symptoms improve. If you are taking one of the listed medications, discuss this with your prescribing doctor to see if a suitable alternative can be prescribed. **DO NOT** stop taking prescribed medication without first talking to your doctor.

Foods	Spicy foods Tomatoes or tomato-based products Chocolate Artificial sweeteners Acidic fruits (citrus, pineapple)
Drinks	Alcohol Tea or coffee (with or without caffeine) Soft drink (with or without caffeine) Citrus fruit juices
Cigarettes	*Major irritant, also causes increased coughing, weakened pelvic floor, and increases risk of bladder cancer
Medications	Blood pressure tablets (diuretics, calcium channel blockers) Some antidepressants Sleeping pills (may reduce awareness of a full bladder)

WATER OR OTHER FLUID INTAKE

Excessive fluid intake causes your kidneys and bladder to work harder to remove the extra fluid from your body. This can exacerbate symptoms of incontinence and urgency. On the other hand, too little fluid intake means the urine will become very concentrated, which may cause bladder irritation. Moreover, poor fluid intake increases your risk of bladder infection, which worsens incontinence symptoms. Although individual needs vary, most people should aim to drink 1.5 to 2 litres of fluid each day.