

A HOW-TO GUIDE

# Banish Bladder Symptoms with 7 Easy Tips



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DISCLAIMER: The contents of this e-book are for informational purposes only. It is not intended to diagnose or replace the care of a licensed health provider. If you experience any pain or major difficulty with the exercises or tips in the e-book, stop immediately and consult with your physical therapist.

## INTRODUCTION: COMMON BLADDER SYMPTOMS

# Hello, I'm your Women's Health Therapist, Julia

I'm a passionate advocate for empowering women to be masters of their own bodies. Over the years, I've worked with many patients, helping them to achieve resolution and self-management strategies for a variety of conditions and symptoms.

Through my experience, I've learned that education can be half the treatment, and I'm excited to share my knowledge and expertise with others who are seeking relief from treatable symptoms.

### **Common bladder symptoms include:**

- Increased frequency of urination
- Increased urgency of urination
- Stress incontinence (leaking with coughing/sneezing/laughing)
- Urge incontinence (leaking when your bladder gets too full)
- Incomplete bladder emptying



I'm happily married to an Air Force Officer and we have a cat named Iron Goddess of Mercy (aka Igms). In my free time, I enjoy doing ninja training and hiking with my husband.



- Julia Niwinski

## CHAPTER 1: BAD BLADDER HABITS TO AVOID

# 3 Common Bad Habits

### 1. No JIC'ing

Do you ever go “Just In Case” before leaving the house? This is called JIC'ing.

This habit is useful only for young children who aren't yet potty trained. As a full-grown potty trained woman, it's time to ditch this bad bladder habit!

Going to the bathroom without the urge to go undermines the natural brain-bladder-pelvic floor communication system. Ignoring this natural signaling process can cause your pelvic floor muscles to either learn to too easily relax at the drop of a hat, or they might get tight and refuse to relax out of confusion.

JIC'in can often lead to increased frequency of urination. At worse, it can also lead to incontinence, incomplete bladder emptying, or a hypertonic pelvic floor.

### 2. No Hovering Over Public Toilets

Great, you stopped JIC'ing and waited for your bladder to signal it's time to go. You already left the house, so your only option is a public toilet.

Wiping the seat with a bit of toilet paper doesn't seem like enough of a precaution, so you decide to hover over the seat without touching it.

Regardless of whether you're using your arms to help, you are essentially holding a squat over the toilet. A squat is an exercise and requires the support of your pelvic floor muscles. However, urinating requires relaxation of your pelvic floor muscles.

This bad habit teaches your pelvic floor muscles one of two things - either they'll learn that they don't need to participate when you're doing actual exercise, leading to stress incontinence, or they'll only partially relax in order to support your squat, leading to incomplete bladder emptying and a potentially hypertonic pelvic floor.

Instead, use a disposable seat cover or carry some wet wipes in your purse.

### 3. No Peeing in the Shower

Admit it, we've all done it. The problem is you're teaching your body it's okay to pee on itself, which can contribute to incontinence. It can also lead to the sound of running water becoming an intense urgency trigger.

## CHAPTER II: GOOD BLADDER HABITS TO ADOPT

# 3 Free Good Habits

## 1. Go On the Second Signal

The brain-bladder-pelvic floor communication system rides on 3 main signals. When your bladder is about 1/3 of the way full, it will send the first signal to your brain that there's something that could be emptied, but it's not urgent. If you know you'll be away from a bathroom for an extended period of time, wait for this signal instead of JIC'ing. However, it's best to usually avoid responding to this first signal to prevent increasing your frequency of urination.

When spacing out recommended daily water consumption (91oz/2.7L ), it's normal to pee every 3-4 hours (5x/day) and a maximum of once at night.

The second signal is sent when your bladder is about 2/3 of the the way full. This is the signal to respond to, but you should still have a comfortable 10-30min to calmly find a bathroom.

The third signal is sent when your bladder is full. At this point, you're doing the pee dance and desperately rushing to the bathroom. It's best to avoid reaching this signal.

To figure out which signal you're experiencing, use common sense based on your liquid consumption.

The female bladder can hold 16-20oz. It can take water 20-25min to reach the bladder (more complex liquids can take 30min-1hr+).

If it's been an hour since you last went to the bathroom, you haven't consumed any liquid, but you're receiving a signal from your bladder, it's likely signal #1.

However, if it's been two hours since you last went to the bathroom, but you drank an entire 16oz beverage in 10min and now you're getting a bladder signal, it's likely to be signal #2.

## 2. Balance Bladder Irritants/Diuretics

A diuretic (eg. caffeine, water pills) is a substance that pulls water out of your bloodstream for excretion.

A bladder irritant (eg. alcohol, artificial sweetener, carbonation, chocolate, tomatoes, spicy food, citrus) is a substance that, in large enough quantities, irritates your bladder's lining and requires immediate excretion.

## CHAPTER II: CONTINUED

Coffee is a double-whammy, being both a diuretic and a bladder irritant. This doesn't mean you need to avoid coffee, just determine whether a venti vs. a grande will ruin the rest of your day. Also, avoid combining too many bladder irritants. If you're planning on having a few alcoholic drinks in the evening and you're worried about worsening symptoms, have a smaller coffee that day, lay off the carbonated beverages, or switch to herbal tea.

### 3. Listen to Your Body

Frequent UTI symptoms might actually be the result of a pelvic floor dysfunction that cranberry juice won't cure.

Stress can make it hard to initiate urination, leaving you sitting on the toilet for 1-2min before anything starts happening.

Stress can also make your pelvic floor tighten up before you're finished going, leading to incomplete emptying.

Not listening to your body can lead to holding your pee for a full 8hr+commute work day and cause urge incontinence.

Often, the work of a Women's Health Therapist is to translate the signals your body is giving you that something needs to change. Imagine if you knew the correct response for whatever signal your body throws at you!



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CHAPTER III: EASY UNIVERSAL EXERCISE

# Breathe: 1 Exercise Done 3 Ways



## Version A

Sit on an exercise ball or the corner of your bed. Place one hand on your chest and the other on your belly. Take a deep breath in and note whether one hand moves more than the other.

Practice 3 breaths each of:

- Both hands moving the same amount simultaneously
- The belly hand moving more
- The chest hand moving more

Difficulty performing any of these breathing styles can indicate excessive external bladder pressure and/or difficulty controlling your pelvic floor. Keep practicing daily until you can easily perform each pattern.



## Version B

Start in a plank from your hands and knees (hands under shoulders and hips straight). Take a deep breath in as you rock back into child's pose. Rest for 4 seconds. Exhale as you rock forward again into plank. Hold for 4 seconds. Repeat for x10 breaths.

Coordinating your breathing with the motion in your pelvis can relieve excessive internal pressure on your bladder and reset the pelvic floor muscles.



## Version C

On hands and knees, perform cat/cow. Inhale during cow (belly to the floor), and exhale during cat (back to the ceiling). Slowly repeat for x10 breaths.

**Perform all three versions or select your favorite.**

## CONCLUSION: BONUS TIP

# This is the beginning of something good.

Congratulations! You are now armed with the knowledge to create the healthiest environment for your bladder. Bad habits be gone and good habits start today.

You may be wondering why Kegels, the most well-known pelvic floor activation exercise, did not come up in a book mentioning incontinence. You may also be curious to know more about the “hypertonic pelvic floor” mentioned several times. The answer to both of these goes hand in hand - In my experience, having very tight (ie. hypertonic) pelvic floor muscles is much more common than a lax pelvic floor in those younger than 75. If you have a hypertonic pelvic floor (common symptoms include pain with vaginal penetration, difficulty initiating urination, and incontinence), then Kegels will not be the most effective treatment for you in the beginning. Mastering the breathing exercises provided is always step 1 with my patients. Controlled breathing can often be the most effective strategy for managing symptoms in the moment.

Some of my patients have been able to banish their bladder symptoms in just 3 visits, primarily by implementing the advice I've given you in this book. My hope is that you fall into this category, can banish your bladder symptoms on your own, and spread the word to friends, family, and even other healthcare providers.

If you are struggling with anything mentioned in this book, have implemented everything and are still experiencing symptoms, or require individualized help with something like environmental incontinence triggers (eg. pulling into your driveway gives you a sudden intense urge you can't always control), then consulting with a Women's Health Physical Therapist is your best next step.

As with mental health therapists, finding a good fit with your physical therapist is just as important. That's why I offer Complimentary Consultations to ensure that you're someone who would benefit from physical therapy and that we align with the plan of care.

Visit the B-Health website to schedule your Complimentary Consultation, whether in-person or virtual, today.



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