

# **The Impact of Nutrition on Bladder and Bowel Health**

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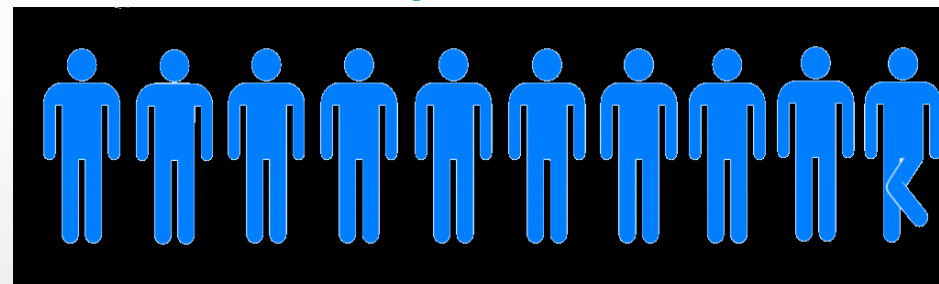
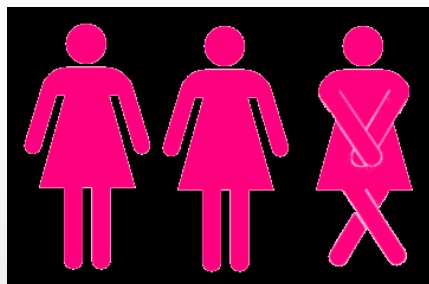
# Take-home Message

- Incontinence is a symptom, not a disease
- Bladder and bowel health can be significantly improved through paying attention to diet and fluid intake
- Individualised, person-centred care will help improve outcomes

# Why talk about bladder and bowel health?

It is estimated that 14 million people in the UK have bladder control problems, MOST OF THEM WOMEN

**Less than half of those will seek help and advice**



**More people suffer with bladder problems than with asthma, diabetes and epilepsy put together**

Bladder and Bowel Foundation (2014)

# Why talk about bladder and bowel health?

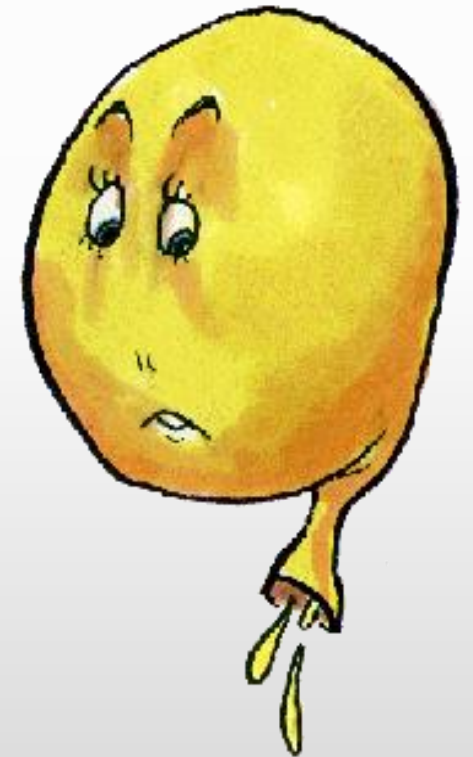
- The majority of people can be cured, or their symptoms significantly improved **WITHOUT** medication or surgery
- **DIET** plays a significant role in this



# Urinary incontinence is...

A symptom that something is wrong:

- With the bladder
- With the pelvic floor muscles that hold in the urine
- With brain-bladder communication
- Somewhere else in the body – arms and legs even



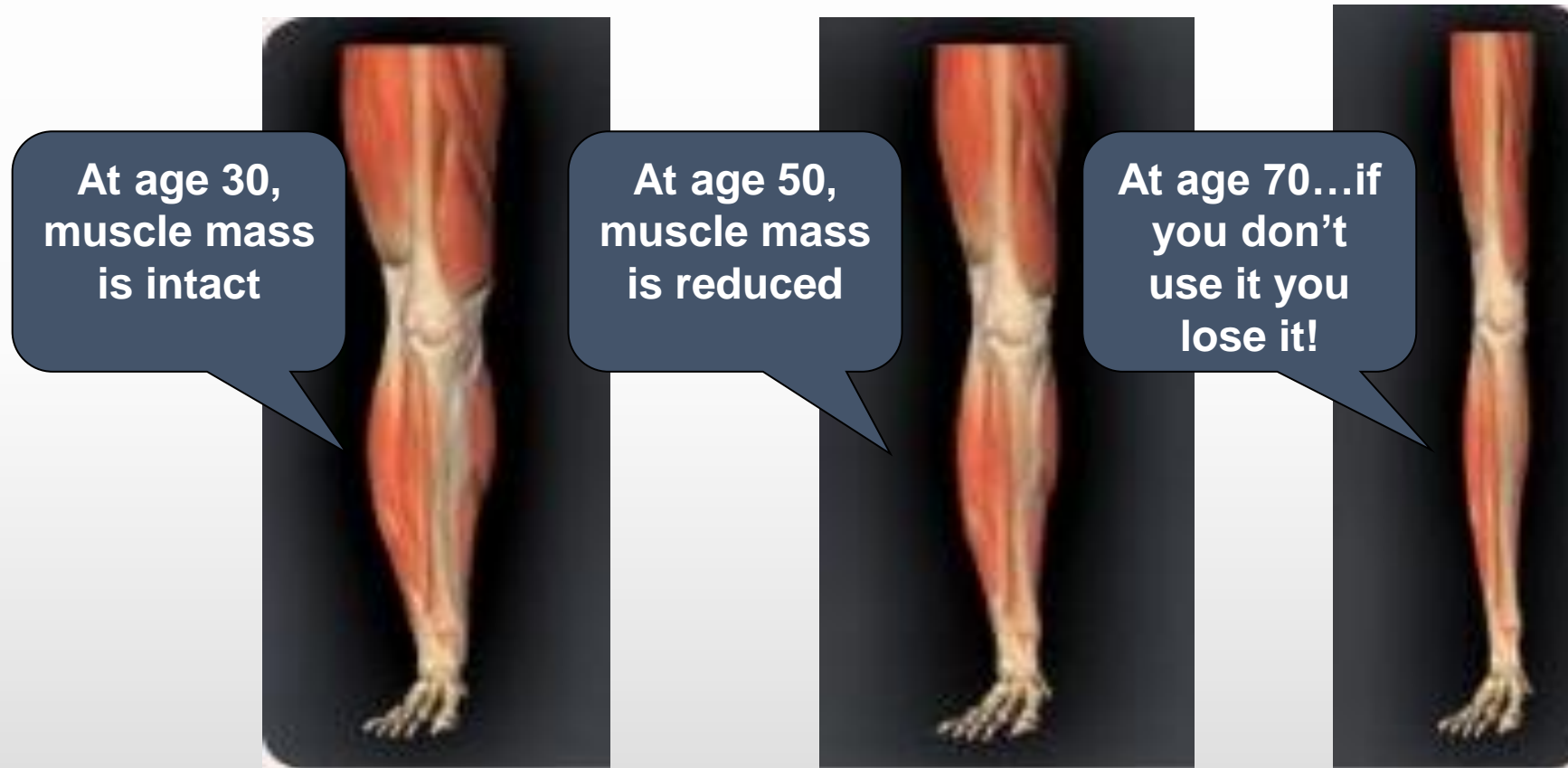
# What can be done?

**Quite a lot!**

- Pelvic floor exercises
- Look at diet and drinking habits
- Developing some useful coping techniques

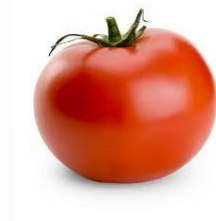


# Muscle tissue diminishes with age



After age 35, people lose 1/3 to as much as 1/2 pound of muscle every year, while gaining a similar amount in body fat.

# Bladder Irritants





**1.5-2 litres per day (6-8 cups)**



**decaffeinated**



**decaffeinated**

# Constipation

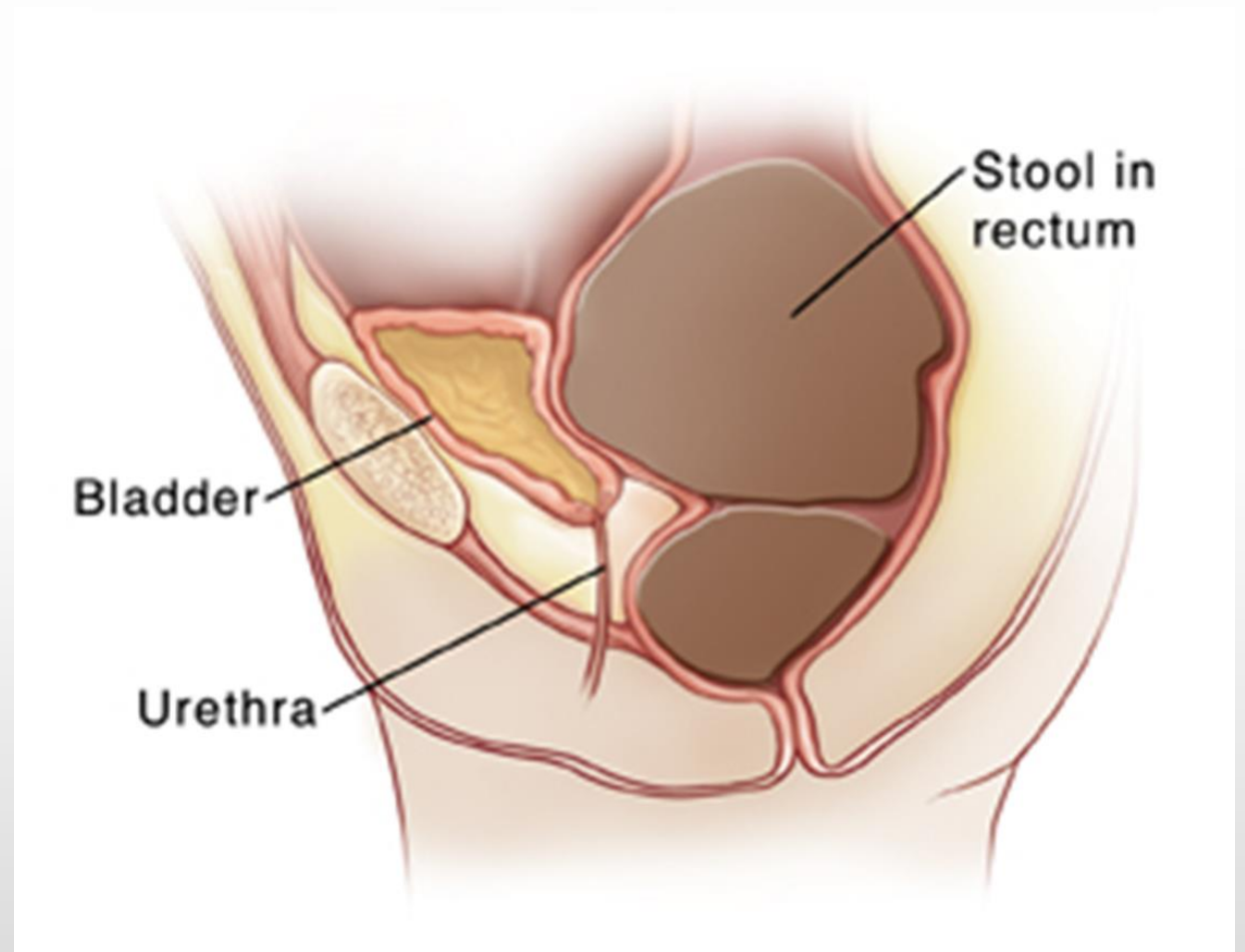
- Constipation is a common problem at all ages
- Constipation is twice as common in women as in men
- As people get older their bowels can become a bit sluggish e.g. due to change in diet and less exercise
- Constipation is common during pregnancy, affecting about 40% of women (Cullen and O'Donoghue, 2007)

# What is Constipation?

## Definition

BNF definition: 'the passage of hard stools less frequently than the patient's normal pattern.'

**N.B.** If left untreated, constipation can lead to urinary problems, rectal loading or faecal impaction, or even faecal incontinence because of the impacted bowel



# Signs of Constipation

- Faecal incontinence
- Passing pellet-like stools
- Straining to pass stool, which is dry, hard and painful to pass.
- Swollen stomach
- Pain and/or discomfort
- Nausea and/or vomiting
- Poor appetite
- Headaches
- Bladder problems
- Bad breath

# Basics of Promoting a Healthy Bowel

- Eating a healthy, balanced diet is known to enhance the function of the bowel
- Maintaining an appropriate food intake, containing fibre and fruit and vegetables
- Diet should include at least 18g of soluble and insoluble dietary fibre (NHS Choices, 2013)

Sources of dietary fibre are:

Oat bran, barley, vegetables, beans, fruit (soluble), wholemeal bread and cereals, beans and skin of fruit and vegetables

**NB: dietary fibre should be increased slowly to reduce discomfort that can be caused by bloating and flatulence**

# Basics of Promoting a Healthy Bowel

- Fluid intake of at least 1500-2000mls
- Avoid fluids that contain caffeine
- Limit the amount of alcohol
- Swap white bread for wholegrain or granary bread
- Eat breakfast
- Eat small, regular meals
- Don't miss meals – a lack of food in the system can cause excessive gas – and lead to a gurgling , wind filled stomach

# Basics of Promoting a Healthy Bowel

- Some food may constipate some people
- Large or fatty meals should be avoided before bed
- Food should be chewed well – this helps release enzymes that aid digestion so that food is processed thoroughly and all the goodness extracted
- Limit the amount of sugary and fatty foods

# Basics of Promoting a Healthy Bowel

## What to look for:

- Fibre content – too much or too little
- Amount of wheat products – possible intolerance
- Spicy foods – increase gut motility
- High in fat – may increase gut motility
- Trigger foods
- Milk – possible intolerance
- Coffee, diet drinks, sports drinks, excess alcohol – may increase gut motility giving a loose stool



# Take-home Message

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