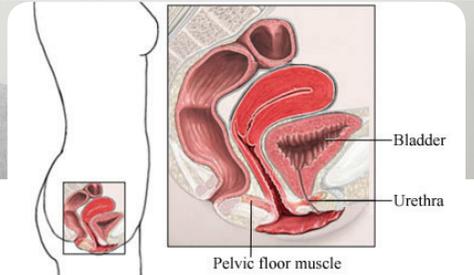


Pelvic Conditions: URINARY INCONTINENCE IN WOMEN



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Urinary incontinence is the loss of voluntary bladder control that can cause leakage of urine. It can be temporary or last for a long time. There are four types of long-term or permanent incontinence. People may have just one or a combination of these types.

- **STRESS INCONTINENCE** – The most common type. Leakage occurs when there is extra pressure on the bladder. Triggers may include laughing, sneezing, lifting heavy objects, or exercise.
- **URGE INCONTINENCE** – Known as overactive bladder; a loss of bladder control following a strong urge to urinate. The bladder is unable to hold urine long enough to make it to a restroom.
- **OVERFLOW INCONTINENCE** – The bladder will not empty, so urine builds up and the bladder overflows.
- **FUNCTIONAL INCONTINENCE** – There is normal bladder control, but the toilet can't be reached in time.

Causes

Incontinence has several different causes. The cause could also be unclear.

TEMPORARY INCONTINENCE:

- Medication
- Constipation
- Infection
- Muscle weakness
- Restricted mobility
- Obesity
- Disorders such as diabetes

STRESS INCONTINENCE:

- Weakening of muscles that suspend the bladder
- Obesity
- Weakening of muscles that control urine flow

URGE INCONTINENCE:

- Urinary tract infection
- Diabetes type 1 and type 2
- Irritation such as a stone or a tumor
- Drugs such as hypnotics or diuretics
- Caffeine and or alcohol
- Nerve damage due to:
 - Spinal cord injury
 - Stroke
 - Multiple sclerosis
 - Parkinson's disease

OVERFLOW INCONTINENCE:

- A bladder that is blocked, such as by a scar in the urethra
- Fecal impaction
- Weak bladder muscles
- Vitamin B12 deficiency

- Drugs such as antidepressants, hypnotics, antipsychotics, antihistamines, or calcium channel blockers
- Nerve damage due to:
 - Surgery
 - Diabetes
 - Spinal cord injuries

FUNCTIONAL INCONTINENCE:

- Medical conditions that make it difficult to move like severe arthritis
- Drugs that cause confusion or sedation

Some incontinence may be caused by a fistula. The fistula can make it difficult for the bladder to act as it should.

Risk Factors

Urinary incontinence is more common in women age 65 years or older. Factors that may increase the risk of urinary incontinence include:

- History of multiple pregnancies
- Urinary tract infection
- Obesity
- Chronic lung disease
- Urethritis
- Pelvic organ prolapse
- Hysterectomy or urethral surgery
- Depression
- Dementia, including Alzheimer's
- Menopause
- Diabetes
- Stroke
- Multiple sclerosis
- Spinal cord injury or disease
- Use of certain substances such as caffeine, alcohol
- Use of certain medications

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Symptoms

Any loss of bladder control can be considered incontinence. Call your doctor if you have a loss of urine control. The doctor can help you determine the underlying cause.

Diagnosis

The doctor will ask about your symptoms and medical history. You will be asked how often you empty your bladder and patterns of urine leakage. The doctor will do a physical exam to look for any physical causes such as blockages or nerve problems. You may be referred to a specialist.

Bodily fluids may be tested. This can be done with:

- Blood and urine tests
- Urine tests

The flow of urine will be assessed. This can be done with:

- Stress test
- Urodynamic tests

Bodily structures may need to be viewed. This can be done with:

- Ultrasound
- Cystoscopy

Treatment

Treatments are based on the cause of the urinary incontinence. Physical therapy may be referred as part of a treatment program. Physical therapy programs are designed to correct functional disorders, improve muscle function and strength, relieve pain, promote healing and recovery, and when necessary, help patients adapt to permanent disabilities. Services offered by physical therapists to reduce urinary incontinence may include:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensive evaluation • Myofascial release (internal & external) • Trigger point release (internal & external) • Joint mobilization • Massage • Patient education • Heat and ice | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ultrasound • Therapeutic exercise for the pelvic floor musculature • Core strengthening • Activity modification • Postural education • Stretching • Relaxation techniques • Biofeedback (internal & external) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Electrical stimulation (internal & external) • Muscle re-education • Bladder and bowel retraining and patterning • Fluid and food intake management • Cardiovascular training • Kegel instruction |
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Prevention

Incontinence is a symptom of many other conditions. There are several ways to prevent incontinence:

- If advised by your doctor, do exercises to strengthen your pelvic floor muscles, such as Kegel exercises. This is especially important if you are pregnant.
- Reduce your intake of substances that lead to incontinence such as caffeine, alcohol, and certain drugs.
- Lose weight, if needed.
- Eat a healthy diet to avoid constipation.