

The Truth about Bladder Control Problems



In the past 12 months (or since your last doctor visit), have you had a problem with a loss of bladder control – or urinary incontinence (UI) – that is bothersome enough that you would like to know more about how it could be treated?

UI is both a very common problem and a very treatable one.

If UI is a problem for you, it's important to remember that there's nothing to be embarrassed about – it's a normal health problem like any other. Talk to your doctor so that he or she can go over what your options are. For most people, UI can be managed through medical treatment or simple lifestyle changes.

Causes

Common causes of UI include:

- Certain foods, drinks and medications
- Having given birth
- Constipation
- Enlarged prostate (men)
- Hysterectomy (women)
- Menopause (women)
- Urinary tract infection

Treatment

Your doctor will talk to you about your UI and ask you questions, such as:

- Have you leaked any urine since you've last been to the doctor?
- Have you had any falls because you have been rushing to the bathroom?

Your doctor will also discuss your treatment options, which may include:

- **Pelvic floor exercises – also known as Kegel exercises.** These exercises help strengthen the urinary and pelvic floor muscles.
- **Bladder training.** Learning to delay going to the bathroom, urinating and then waiting a few minutes before going again or setting times throughout the day to urinate can lead to gaining back bladder control.
- **Medication.** UI medications are usually used along with other treatments.
- **Medical devices.** These may include protective pads or panty liners.
- **Surgery.** This is usually used as a final option.

Understanding Urinary Incontinence (Cont.)

What You Can Do to Ease UI

In addition to the treatment plan you and your doctor agree to, there are lifestyle changes you can make to manage UI.

- Change what, when and how much you drink.
- Talk to your doctor about your signs and symptoms of incontinence and your bathroom habits.
- If you take diuretics (water pills), take them in the morning, not at night.
- Avoid dehydration so you won't need to drink large quantities of liquid at once.
- Avoid soda and caffeine (coffee, tea, chocolate); they may irritate the bladder.
- Avoid drinking fluids after dinner.
- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Make bathrooms easily accessible and well-lit.
- Make sure there are no tripping hazards on your way to the bathroom. Use grab bars as needed; this can help to prevent falls
- Know where bathrooms are when you're out in public.
- Wear clothing that's easy to remove, unzip, etc.
- Some activities, like coughing, sneezing or sudden position changes, may cause urine to leak. Wearing absorbent products can help.

Resources

National Institute on Aging Urinary Incontinence in Older Adults:

<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/urinary-incontinence-older-adults>