

Urinary Incontinence

Urinary Incontinence, or loss of bladder control, is defined as a condition in which a person is unable to hold urine and prevent leakage.

Types of Urinary Incontinence:

Classified by the symptoms or circumstances occurring at the time of urine leakage:

- ▶ Stress: allows small amounts of urine to leak when sneezing, cough or exercising
- ▶ Urge: when an overactive bladder contracts involuntarily
- ▶ Mixed: combination of stress and urge incontinence
- ▶ Overflow: when the bladder becomes so full it overflows
- ▶ Environmental: occurs when people cannot get to the toilet when needed
- ▶ Nocturnal: occurs during sleep

Diagnosis:

Your doctor will measure your bladder capacity and residual urine for evidence of poorly functioning bladder muscles. The following may also be recommended

- ▶ Stress test
- ▶ Urinalysis
- ▶ Blood Test
- ▶ Ultrasound
- ▶ Your doctor may also ask you to keep a diary.

Treatments

- ▶ Exercises: Kegel exercised to strengthen or retain pelvic floor muscles
- ▶ Electrical Stimulation: Brief doses strengthen muscles in the lower pelvis
- ▶ Timed Voiding (urinating) or Bladder Training: techniques effective with urge and overflow incontinence.
- ▶ Medications: some medications inhibit contractions of an overactive bladder, while others relax muscles, leading to more complete bladder emptying during urination. Some medications tighten bladder and urethra muscles, preventing leakage.
- ▶ Implants: Collagen or fat from the patient's body is injected into tissue around the urethra. Implants add bulk and help close the urethra.
- ▶ Surgery: usually suggested after other treatments have been tried.
- ▶ Catheterization: usually used if incontinence is caused by poor muscle tone, past surgery or spinal cord injury.
- ▶ Other: many women use absorbent products and devices that catch slight leaks.

Remember

- ▶ Urinary incontinence is common in women.
- ▶ All types of urinary incontinence can be treated.
- ▶ Incontinence can be treated at all ages.
- ▶ You need not be embarrassed by incontinence.

This information is general. If your doctor tells you something different, follow his or her instructions.

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For more information about women's health issues, stop by our Resource Center at 2000 West First Street, Piedmont Plaza II, 1st Floor, Winston Salem, NC 27104, visit our website at <http://www.wakehealth.edu/WHCOE/> or contact us at (336) 713-4220.