

Urinary Incontinence

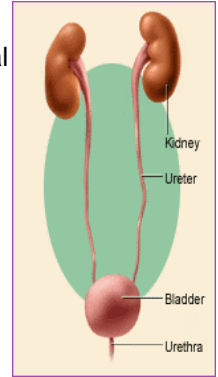
For the patient

What is incontinence?

Incontinence, or loss of bladder control, is a symptom that can be caused by many different disorders or conditions. Some of these causes are birth defects, surgery, medications, neurological diseases, pelvic injuries, degenerative affects from aging, and childbirth. Urinary incontinence it is not a normal part of aging.

Incontinence occurs when there is a problem with the urinary system. The urinary system is composed of the kidneys, ureter, bladder, and urethra. The kidneys are always producing urine by removing waste products. As the urine is produced, it travels to the bladder through the ureters. The bladder then stores the urine until it can be conveniently eliminated from the body through the urethra. A muscle around the urethra, called the sphincter, helps control this.

Incontinence can occur when there is a problem with any of the above processes.



Four types of incontinence:

- **Urge:** When you find yourself with an urge to urinate and having a difficult time making it to the bathroom in time. This can be caused by damage to the nerve that controls bladder contraction.
- **Stress:** When you find yourself “leaking” during exercise, coughing sneezing, or other movements that put pressure on the bladder. This can be caused by damage to the sphincter muscle itself.
- **Mixed:** A mixture of the above two types (Urge and Stress) where often times one is more prevalent than the other.
- **Overflow:** When the bladder is given more urine than it can handle and leakage occurs.

Treatment Options

There are many different types of treatment options available to patients with urinary incontinence with very high success rates. The first step in determining how you can be treated is to see your physician or specialist and get diagnosed. This will include a medical history and physical exam. Some test may need to be run such as blood, urine analysis and other urinary system functioning tests. Depending on the diagnosis, there could be very simple changes in diet or lifestyle that could cure incontinence.

Some treatment options include behavioral modifications, pharmacological, and as a last result, surgical.

- **Behavioral:**
 - ✓ Scheduled toileting: The patient will urinate every 2 to 4 hours and keep to a schedule.
 - ✓ Bladder retraining: The patient starts with a scheduled toileting and gradually increases the time between urination to help remind the bladder of how and when to void.
 - ✓ Pelvic exercise: The patient is taught ways to strengthen the muscles that help control urination.
- **Pharmacological:**

Different medications can be very effective in helping to control urinary incontinence. There are many options for different types, therefore it is important to talk with your doctor or pharmacist if you are concerned. There are also many medications that may cause urinary incontinence symptoms; your doctor or pharmacists could help you with other medication options if this is a concern. It is very important that you do not discontinue any medications unless recommended by your doctor.
- **Surgical:**

This is done as a last resort after all pharmacological and behavioral treatment options are explored. A qualified health care professional is the only one to determine if surgery needs to be performed. The type of surgery depends on the underlying cause of the incontinence.

There are other products available for patients to help manage incontinence such as absorbent products, catheters, and external collections systems. Ask your pharmacist for more information.

For more information

- ❖ Contact you community pharmacist, physician, or other trusted health care provider.
- ❖ Attend your local community’s 9 News Health Fair (April 16th – 24th 2005).
- ❖ Visit the following websites for free information:
 - National Association for Continence at: http://www.nafc.org/about_incontinence/
 - Urology Channel at: <http://www.urologychannel.com/incontinence/index.shtml>
 - American Foundation for Urologic Disease: <http://www.afud.org/conditions/ui.asp>