

Urinary Incontinence

What is it?

Urinary incontinence is very common and is caused by loss of urine from your bladder and you cannot stop it. It can affect people of all ages, but it is most common in females and older people.

There are many kinds of urinary incontinence of which include:

- **Stress incontinence:** you may have small leaks of urine when you cough, sneeze, laugh or exercise
- **Urge incontinence:** causes a sudden and strong need to pass urine. You may also need to go often or during the middle of the night
- **Overflow incontinence:** is when your bladder does not empty all the way. You can have leaks all the time
- **Functional incontinence:** this may cause a little leaking or for urine to pass. This may be due to mobility problems or dementia

Each have a range of causes and treatments.

What will my healthcare team do?

Your doctor will ask about your symptoms. They will ask how often you have trouble going to the toilet and how much it affects you. Your doctor will also examine you, ask about your medical history and any medicines you are taking. You will need to keep a record of your toilet habits. Your doctor may test your urine and send you for a scan. They may refer you to a specialist or a continence health professional. You can do special exercises for your pelvic floor muscles. You can also train your bladder to increase how much urine you can hold.

If none of those things work, you can ask if surgery will help.

What questions could I ask my doctor?

- ☐ *What treatment options do you recommend?*
- ☐ *What exercises should I do?*
- ☐ *What can I do to improve my symptoms?*



What can I do?

Some lifestyle changes can help urinary incontinence. These are things like not drinking alcohol or fizzy drinks and not eating spicy food. You need to drink lots of water and eat a healthy diet. Staying active and a healthy weight will also help. If you smoke, it is recommended you quit. There are some medicines that can help. Talk to your doctor about whether medicine is the right for you.

What supports are available?

For factsheets on improving continence health for all ages go to continence.org.au

Call the **National Continence Helpline** for free and confidential help available, staffed by a team of continence nurse advisers **1800 33 00 66**.

Where can I learn more?

- Healthdirect Australia – Symptom checker: healthdirect.gov.au
- Continence Foundation of Australia – Pelvic Floor Muscle Training for Women: continence.org
- ACSQH – Stress Urinary Incontinence: safetyandquality.gov.au

This information is to be viewed by someone who has received a diagnosis from their doctor. It is not designed to be used to diagnose a condition or as a substitute for ongoing medical care

Health Resource Directory is an initiative of South Western Sydney PHN