

Urinary incontinence

Urinary incontinence is any unintentional loss of urine. It may be caused by either urinary tract or nervous system disorders. It may be transient (lasting less than four weeks) or permanent. It causes social embarrassment and hygiene problems, and affects mainly women and the elderly.

Transient incontinence may be due to urine infection, decompensated diabetes, etc. and disappears when the cause is corrected.

Incontinence may be favored by vaginal birth, diabetes, chronic cough, obesity, chronic constipation, neurological diseases, abdominal surgery, some drug products, urinary infections, and prostate problems in men.

What are the types of incontinence?

Stress incontinence: dribbling small amounts of urine when exercising, coughing, laughing, sneezing or running.

Urge incontinence: a strong, sudden need to urinate. There are more frequent urinations during the day or at night, inability to control urination and large urine loss.

A combination of stress and urge incontinence is called mixed incontinence.

Overflow incontinence: the bladder cannot empty completely because it has difficulty squeezing out the urine. This leads to overflow, dribbling, and a feeling that the bladder is never empty.

Functional incontinence: caused by difficulty reaching the toilet or undressing self. There would be no incontinence if these impediments didn't exist.

What to do?

Avoid tight clothing, go easy on stimulating beverages and infusions likely to cause an urge to urinate. Some drug products may aggravate your condition. Ask your doctor or nurse.

Concerning **stress** incontinence, **rehabilitation** by means of simple pelvic floor exercises goes a long way. You should exercise daily to strengthen your muscles and thus prevent urine from leaking. Vaginal cones or electrodes may also be used. Should all these fail, surgery may be required.

In **urge** incontinence, bladder habits have to be **retrained** with learning techniques combined with drug products.

How can incontinence be prevented?

Get used to urinating every 3 hours during the day and before you go to bed.

Pregnant and postnatal women must exercise their pelvic floor muscles. These muscles must also be taken care of when doing any sports.

Avoid constipation.

Older people and people with conditions that limit mobility should improve toilet access in their homes and wear easily removable clothing.

