



URINARY INCONTINENCE

Inability to hold back urine; leaking urine without feeling the urge to urinate

CAUSES

Urinary incontinence may be caused by several disorders. Its treatment and care would depend on the type of disorder with which a person is afflicted. A medical diagnosis is essential before proper cure and care can be implemented.

STRESS INCONTINENCE

Stress incontinence is a kind of bladder problem that occurs when urine accidentally leaks out during physical activity and coughing, sneezing, or laughing. Common among women, this is not very serious. However, medical consultation may be necessary for proper treatment.

Symptoms:

- For females, urine leaks when engaging in physical activity, or when coughing or sneezing
- For males, urine dribbles when done urinating

DO:

- If problems persists or causes embarrassment, consult a doctor.
- Use adult diapers only if recommended by a urologist.

DON'T:

- Don't hold back urine even at night.



BLADDER INFECTION

Cystitis and *urinary tract infection* (UTI) are two types of bladder infections. These may be caused by improper hygiene, sexual intercourse, urinary procedures, or tight-fitting underwear.

Symptoms:

- Strong urge to urinate but small amount of urine is produced
- Traces of blood in the urine
- Pain in the lower back or the area above the groin where the bladder is located
- Low-grade fever

DO:

- Drink plenty of fluids especially coconut water.
- Minimize intake of alcohol and caffeine.
- Urinate before and after sexual intercourse.
- During menstruation, change sanitary napkin or tampons frequently. Wash with vaginal antiseptic.
- After bathing, dry pubic area with a soft towel.
- Wear cotton underwear to let the air circulate.
- Take antibiotics as prescribed by a doctor.

DON'T:

- Don't engage in sexual activity until the condition is completely healed.
- After passing stool, do not wipe bottom from back to front as the bacteria from the feces may infect the bladder easily.
- Don't hold back urine.
- Do not insert tampons with unwashed hands.
- Do not apply oil, perfume or talc on the pubic area as this may cause irritation.



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UNINHIBITED BLADDER CONTRACTIONS

Uninhibited bladder contractions or *urge incontinence* is a problem that is most common in elderly people. In urge incontinence, the urge to urinate is so strong that people sometimes do not make it to the rest room to urinate. This may be caused by underlying diseases, stress, weak pelvic muscles or certain medications. This problem, though debilitating, can be controlled through exercises and other measures.

Symptoms:

- Inability to hold back urge to urinate

DO:

- For females, try the Kegel exercises to strengthen pelvic muscles: While sitting or lying down, contract the muscles around the vagina and anus and hold for at least ten seconds then relax.
- For males, pressing the base of the penis against the pubic bone will release the remaining drops of urine and prevent dribbling.
- Go to the bathroom regularly especially after a meal, before bedtime or while traveling. Try to urinate every couple of hours to lose some of the urgency of a full bladder.

DON'T:

- Do not try doing Kegel exercises while urinating as this may cause urinary tract infections.

PROSTATE CONDITION

Problems concerning the prostate gland are frequent among males. The prostate gland can be found between the pubic bone and the rectum of a man. The most common prostate problem is prostate enlargement or *benign prostatic hyperplasia*. The prostate gland enlarges and results in the narrowing or eventual obstruction of the urinary passage causing urinating problems. Middle-aged men are most at risk for this condition. However, difficulty urinating may also be caused by other underlying conditions.

Symptoms:

- Dribbling urine in men
- Unusually weak stream of urine
- Frequent and often urgent urination especially during the evening
- Feeling that the bladder is not completely empty
- In some cases, severe and sometimes debilitating lower abdominal pain

DO:

- Empty the bladder as much as possible. After several minutes, try emptying it again.
- For males, pressing the base of the penis against the pubic bone will release the remaining drops of urine and prevent dribbling.
- Consult a doctor if symptoms persist. If left untreated, the condition may worsen.

DO:

- Don't be afraid to discuss symptoms with a doctor.



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ESTROGEN DEFICIENCY

Urinary incontinence in menopausal women is common and may be caused by a lack of estrogen hormones. As women age, the ovaries slowly cease to function, becoming smaller and lighter. During menopause, the tissues of the urethra are thinned considerably (when the ovaries stop producing estrogen) which may result in incontinence.

Symptoms:

- Leakage
- Irregular or no menstrual period for the past 12 months

DO:

- Consult a medical professional who will help explain the changes happening in a woman's body and who will present options for treatment and care.

DON'T:

- Don't be afraid to discuss symptoms with a doctor.

OTHER CAUSES

Other causes may include certain medicines, neurological disorders, pregnancy, recent childbirth, surgery or trauma.

URINARY CONCERNS

Pain, burning sensation or discomfort during urination; discolored, yellowish, cloudy, or foul-smelling urine; abnormal or frequent urination; inability to urinate

BLOCKED URETHRA

This condition most often affects men. A doctor should be consulted immediately.

Symptoms:

- Sudden urge to urinate but can't pass urine

DO:

- Seek medical help immediately. Do not wait until pain is unbearable.

DON'T:

- Don't be afraid to discuss symptoms with a doctor.

DIABETES

See page 131.

SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASE (STD)

See page 116.

OTHER CAUSES

Other causes may include bladder disorders or prostate conditions.