

Urinary Incontinence

Urinary incontinence is any involuntary loss of urine. The two most common types of incontinence are stress incontinence and urge incontinence. “Mixed incontinence” is a combination of both stress and urge incontinence.

Stress Incontinence

What Is It?

Stress incontinence is leakage of urine with activity such as coughing, sneezing, laughing, running or walking. This type of incontinence occurs because the urethra does not close completely.

What Can Be Done About It?

1. **Kegel Exercises** – exercises performed to strengthen the pelvic floor muscles.
2. **Pelvic Floor Physical Therapy** – a physical therapist teaches you to control the muscles involved in urination using biofeedback.
3. **Vaginal Pessary** – a device that is worn in the vagina to help control leakage.
4. **Urethral Insert** – a disposable device inserted into the urethra to block leakage.
5. **Vaginal Estrogen** – Vaginal estrogen may improve stress incontinence by thickening the urethral tissue.
6. **Surgery** – minimally invasive surgeries are available if other treatments for stress incontinence do not help. Surgery may provide the most effective and long-lasting treatment for stress incontinence.

Urge Incontinence

What Is It?

Urge incontinence is an involuntary leakage of urine immediately preceded by a sudden urge to urinate. Many people experience an inability to get to the toilet in time. This type of incontinence is caused by an overactive bladder muscle. With bladder overactivity, the bladder contracts erratically causing unpredictable, sudden urges to urinate with leakage.

What Can Be Done About It?

1. **Diet Changes** – avoiding food and beverages that make urge incontinence worse such as soda, caffeine, citrus, and sugar substitutes.
2. **Pelvic Floor Physical Therapy** – a physical therapist can teach you to use your pelvic floor muscles to suppress sudden urgency and control leakage.
3. **Medication** – medications are available to treat urge urinary incontinence. The most common side effects are dry mouth, dry eyes, urinary retention, and constipation.
4. **InterStim™ Therapy** – A small “pacemaker” for the bladder is surgically implanted beneath the skin to help the nerves that control the bladder to function more normally. This is available if other treatment options are ineffective.

	STRESS URINARY INCONTINENCE	URGE URINARY INCONTINENCE
SYMPTOMS		
Leakage during physical activity	Yes	No
Leakage associated with urge to urinate	No	Yes
Amount of urine leakage	Small	Small to large
Ability to reach the toilet before leaking	Yes	Often not
Waking at night more than once to urinate	Seldom	Often
Urge to urinate more than 8 times per day	No	Yes

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