



# Women's Health

## Urinary Incontinence Help Prevent And Treat The Loss Of Bladder Control



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COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER

# It's Common To Have Loss Of Bladder Control

Your bladder is the organ that holds urine. If you lose control of your bladder, you can't always control when you urinate. You may leak small amounts of urine or have strong urges to urinate that are difficult to control.

Loss of bladder control is very common, especially in women aged 50 and over. As you age, your bladder cannot hold as much urine as it used to. Plus, your stream of urine may be weaker and make you feel like you need to urinate more often. Loss of bladder control is also common in women who have just given birth since their pelvic muscles can weaken after childbirth.

## There Are Different Types Of Bladder Control Problems

### Stress

Urine leaks when you cough, laugh, lift something, or exercise. This often happens when the pelvic muscles are weakened after childbirth or surgery.

### Urge

You get sudden urges to urinate, often before you can get to a toilet. This is most common in the elderly. It may be a sign of a urinary tract infection.

### Overflow

You have an overfilled bladder and leak small amounts of urine uncontrollably. You may feel like you can't empty your bladder all the way. Diabetes or certain medicines may cause the problem.

### Functional

You have trouble getting to the bathroom in time because of arthritis or other diseases that make it hard to move around.

### Mixed

You have more than one of the types of urinary incontinence listed above.



## Bladder Control Problems May Be Caused By:

- » Changes with aging and menopause
- » Some drugs
- » Constipation
- » Being overweight
- » Urinary tract infections
- » Diseases like diabetes, Alzheimer's disease, and multiple sclerosis

## Tell Your Doctor About Your Bladder Control Problems

If you have loss of bladder control, don't feel embarrassed. Tell your doctor, so you can get treatment. Your doctor may have you keep track of how much you drink, how much you urinate, when you urinate, and when you have loss of bladder control. Your doctor may also have a sample of your urine or blood examined at a lab to make a diagnosis.

## You Can Prevent And Treat Loss Of Bladder Control

Treatment can help prevent rashes, sores, skin infections, and urinary tract infections. It will also allow you to spend time with friends and family without worrying about going to the bathroom frequently. Treatment depends on the cause and type of urinary incontinence you have. If it is caused by a medical problem, the urinary incontinence will go away when the problem is treated. Pelvic floor exercises, bladder training, medicine, and surgery can also help treat urinary incontinence.

*If you have loss of bladder control, don't feel embarrassed. Tell your doctor, so you can get treatment.*

## Pelvic Floor Muscles Help Strengthen The Muscles That Control The Bladder

Pelvic floor exercises help prevent loss of bladder control. They can be done anywhere, anytime. It may take 3 to 6 months to see an improvement.

To find the right muscles, try to stop or slow your urine flow without using your stomach, leg, or buttock muscles.

If you can slow or stop the stream of urine, you've located the right muscles.

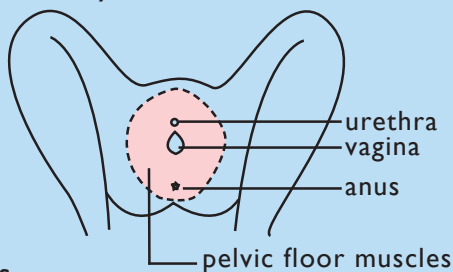
Squeeze your muscles.

Hold for a count of 10.

Relax for a count of 10.

Repeat 10-20 times, 3 times a day.

If you need to start slowly, squeeze and relax your muscles for 4 seconds each. Do this 10 times, 2 times a day, and work your way up from there.



**Internal View**  
to show location of  
the pelvic floor muscles

## Bladder Training Helps Control The Urge To Urinate

Bladder training involves exercises that lengthen the time between urges to urinate.

- » If you feel the urge to urinate, try not to urinate right away. Instead, relax and breathe slowly and deeply. Think about your breathing until the urge goes away. Also, try pelvic floor exercises to help control your urge.
- » Once the urge passes, wait 5 minutes and then go to the bathroom even if you don't feel you need to go. When it's easy to wait 5 minutes after an urge, try waiting 10 minutes.
- » Gradually lengthen the time between when you urinate until you're urinating every 3 to 4 hours. Bladder training may take 3 to 12 weeks.

## Sometimes Surgery Or Medicine Can Help

Your doctor can also prescribe estrogen cream or medicine to help treat your bladder problems. Surgery can help if other treatments haven't worked or if the loss of bladder control is severe.



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