

Urinary Incontinence

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Urinary incontinence (UI), also known as involuntary urination, is any uncontrolled leakage of urine. It is a common and distressing problem, which may influence your life directly. UI are often caused by an underlying problem.

Risk Factors

UI are mostly seen in older women (over 60 years old). There are various things that can lead to the development of urinary incontinence:

- ❖ Pelvic surgery
- ❖ Pregnancy
- ❖ Childbirth – Vaginal delivery
- ❖ Menopause – Bladder & pelvic muscle atrophy

Causes

UI can be caused by various mechanisms in your urinary tract:

- ❖ Overactive bladder (Urge Incontinence)
- ❖ Poor bladder closure (Stress Incontinence)
- ❖ Poor bladder contraction (Overflow Incontinence)
- ❖ Blockage of urinary tract (Overflow Incontinence)
- ❖ Anatomical urinary tract problems (Structural Incontinence)
- ❖ Medication & Health problems – Difficult to reach bathroom (Functional Incontinence)

Diagnosis

UI can be diagnosed based on the type and pattern of urine leakage and various investigations and tests. You can help your doctor with the diagnosis by recording the pattern of urination and the time and amount (big/ small) of urine produced, for a few days.

Treatment

UI can be improved with pelvic muscle exercises, bladder training, surgery, medication and electrical stimulation. Weight loss in obese women can also improve incontinence. Your doctor will be able to assess your incontinence and decide on the most effective treatment plan. If your UI is not treatable with the methods mentioned above, various devices can be used to prevent the spillage of urine. Absorbent products such as: protective underwear and diapers, can be used. They are easy to use and available at most pharmacies. They can, however, be bulky, leak, have odors and cause skin breakdown.

