



# MANAGING URINARY INCONTINENCE



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WHAT CARE FEELS LIKE.

## WHAT SHOULD I KNOW ABOUT URINARY INCONTINENCE (UI)?

Urinary incontinence (UI), or the loss of bladder control, is a common medical problem and nothing to be embarrassed about. Millions of men and women have this problem. The severity of UI ranges from leaking urine occasionally to having an urge to urinate that's so sudden and strong you can't get to the bathroom in time. If you have this problem, help is available.

### How Do I Talk to My Doctor About UI?

If UI stops you from exercising, visiting with friends and family, or sleeping through the night due to frequent bathroom visits, you should see your doctor. In most cases, simple lifestyle changes or medical treatment can make a difference.

Most people do not want to talk to their doctor about UI. But you need to take the first step.

When meeting with your doctor, it's a good idea to be prepared. Bring a list of all your medicines, vitamins and supplements. It also may help to keep a "bladder diary" where you write down information each time you leak urine. Be sure to note what you were doing at the time, such as sneezing, coughing, laughing, exercising or sleeping. Take this log with you when you visit your doctor.

### What should you ask your doctor?

- Could what I eat or drink be causing bladder control problems?
- Could my medicines (prescription and over-the-counter) cause bladder problems?
- Could other medical conditions cause loss of bladder control?
- Which bladder control treatment is best for me?
- What can I do about the odor and rash caused by urine leakage?

## How Is UI Treated?

There are many ways to treat UI. The major types of UI treatment will fall into one of the following groups: behavior changes, medicine or surgery.

## What Can I do?

**Behavioral Changes:** By changing some basic behaviors, you may be able to improve your UI. Behavioral treatments include:

- **Pelvic muscle exercises (Kegel exercises):**  
A doctor or nurse can teach you the right way to do these exercises. A pelvic floor physical therapist can also help teach you how to strengthen these muscles.
- **Bladder retraining:** You may be able to get back bladder control by going to the bathroom at set times. You can slowly increase the time between bathroom trips as you gain control.
- **Weight loss:** Extra weight puts more pressure on your bladder and nearby muscles. This can cause bladder control problems. Work with your doctor to develop a diet and exercise plan if you are overweight.
- **Dietary changes:** Drinking fewer fluids after dinner and eating the right amount of fiber to avoid constipation may help. Also, avoid drinking too many fluids. Six 8-ounce glasses of fluid a day is enough for most people.
- **Quitting smoking:** If you smoke, quit. Studies show that smokers have more frequent and severe urine leaks than non-smokers.

We can help you quit smoking. Our Tobacco-Free PATH program, in partnership with Roswell Park Cancer Institute, offers the Roswellness InhaleLife program at no cost. To join this program, please call **1-866-NY-QUITS (1-866-697-8487)** Monday to Friday 8 am to 9 pm, Saturday, 9 am to 7 pm, and Sunday 9 am to 5 pm. TTY/TDD users should call **711**.

**Medicines:** A doctor can prescribe certain medicines to help with bladder control and can also take you off a drug that may be causing or contributing to loss of bladder control. Of course, only your doctor should tell you to stop using a drug he or she has prescribed. It is important to take your medicine exactly as your doctor tells you.



## **Additional Resources**

- National Association for Continence (NAFC)  
**[www.nafc.org](http://www.nafc.org)**
- National Kidney and Urologic Diseases  
Information Clearinghouse  
Phone: **1-800-891-5390**  
TDD: **1-866-569-1162**  
**[www.kidney.niddk.nih.gov](http://www.kidney.niddk.nih.gov)**
- US Department of Health & Human Services,  
National Institute on Aging  
**[www.nia.nih.gov/health/publication/  
urinary-incontinence](http://www.nia.nih.gov/health/publication/urinary-incontinence)**





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