



Bladder Battles

Developing urinary incontinence is a common (though far from inevitable) part of life. If you're experiencing incontinence, here are some things you should know - and things you can **do**.

First: Talk to your Doctor

Whether you experience an itsy-bitsy leak when you sneeze or laugh (stress incontinence), constantly feel like you have to go (urge incontinence), suffer from a constant dribbling of urine (overflow incontinence), or have a hard time making it to the toilet in time (functional incontinence), your bladder issues are no doubt negatively affecting your daily life. That's why you need to talk to your doctor. Your doctor can help you reclaim your life by mapping out a treatment plan, and he or she may even uncover an underlying condition. Yes, it can be an uncomfortable topic, but this is an extremely common issue -- your doctor has heard it all before, and there's nothing to be embarrassed about. Be prepared to answer some possible questions from your doctor:

- Frequency of urination and when you started noticing the problem
- How much fluid you drink daily, and how much of those fluids include caffeine or alcohol
- A detailed description of your particular issue: What are you doing when it happens? How do you describe the urge to urinate? How much urine is lost?
- How often you urinate at night
- Any medications you're taking
- If there is blood in the urine or pain during urination.

Some Common Causes

Just like there are several types of incontinence, there are multiple causes for the condition. Some of the most common include:

- Diuretics: According to Mayo Clinic, certain drinks, foods and medications can stimulate your bladder and increase your urine volume. Diuretics include caffeine, chocolate, alcohol, and heart and blood pressure

medications.

- Urinary tract infections
- Weak or overactive bladder muscles
- Constipation
- Aging: The bladder's ability to store urine can decrease when we get older. An enlarged prostate can also aggravate incontinence in men.
- Some factors -- including being overweight, smoking and family history -- may put you more at risk of developing urinary incontinence
- Medical conditions that may raise the risk of urinary incontinence include: stroke and spinal core injury, kidney disease, restricted mobility, diabetes and neurological disorders, including Parkinson's disease and multiple sclerosis.

Treatment

According to the University of Maryland Medical Center, treatment options depend on the type and severity of your incontinence. Lifestyle changes (for example, losing weight and avoiding alcohol and caffeine) or medications may help, and surgery can correct severe urinary incontinence.

Don't wait to start tackling your incontinence issues. Once you do, you'll wonder why you waited so long.

PLAN OF ACTION:

Remember, you're far from alone in your battle with an incontinent bladder, and your primary care provider wants to hear about what's concerning you. He or she can help you determine a course of action at your next annual wellness visit.