



INCONTINENCE Instructions

Seeking treatment for urinary incontinence is a personal decision. For some women, leaking even small amounts of urine is a problem. Others simply make changes in lifestyle, such as wearing absorbent pads and taking steps to control odor. If symptoms of urinary incontinence bother you and are having a negative effect on your life, you may want to seek treatment.

Many women with mild incontinence can stop leaks by drinking less. Try pouring your cups half-full, and stay away from coffee, tea, and sodas with caffeine. Caffeine can create more urine, making you go more often. If you have leakage in the early morning or at night, you may want to limit your intake of fluids several hours before bedtime. Limiting the amount of fluids you drink also may be useful (no more than 2 liters total a day). If your urine is pale or has no color, you may be drinking too much.

Other measures - There are ways to lower your risk of incontinence. Keep a healthy weight is most helpful. Losing even a small amount of weight (less than 10% of total body weight) may decrease urine leakage. If you smoke, try to quit. Smoking can lead to chronic coughing, which can stress the bladder and cause leaks. Smoking also has a generally damaging effects on all your tissues.

The goal of bladder training is to learn how to control the urge to empty the bladder and increase the time span between urinating to normal intervals. The first step is to make a chart of what times you go to the bathroom and when you leak. After studying the patterns, you can avoid accidents by heading to the bathroom before a leak might happen. It's also possible to train your bladder to hold out for longer and longer periods between bathroom visits. Another strategy is to empty your bladder regularly, every two to four hours, whether you need to go or not. Try and keep to the schedule.

Kegel exercises - Because stress incontinence comes from weak pelvic muscles, consider trying to strengthen those muscles. You can do this with Kegel exercises: Clench the muscles you would use to stop the flow of urine. Hold the squeeze for 10 seconds, then relax. Do three or four sets every day. As these muscles get stronger, so will your bladder control.

Biofeedback – This is a method that gives you real-time information about activity in your bladder and pelvic muscles. In one type of biofeedback, sensors are placed inside or outside the vagina that measure the force of pelvic muscle contraction. When you

contract the right muscles, you will see the measurement on a monitor. This feedback lets you know that you are doing Kegel exercises in the right way. There are in-home biofeedback devices that you can use as well. As you learn more about these functions, you may be better able to control them. Biofeedback is often used along with Kegel exercises.

Medical Treatments - For urge incontinence, and sometimes for stress incontinence we often suggest anticholinergic medicines. These pills or patches block some of the nerves in the bladder muscle. Studies show that taking the meds with bladder training works well. Possible side effects of these medications include dry mouth, dry eyes, and constipation.

Botox injections into the bladder muscle can relax the bladder, which allows it to hold more urine. Botox injections aren't permanent, but they can last up to eight or nine months in the bladder. They can be repeated, too.

Surgery for stress incontinence can be an outpatient procedure, to lift and strengthen the bladder neck. The neck of the bladder is placed in a "sling" -- a piece of tissue or material that holds the bladder up and prevents leaks. Another procedure pulls the bladder up to a more normal position without a sling.

For urge incontinence, a doctor can implant a device that stimulates nerves near the bladder and controls spasms with electrical signals.

Urinary incontinence products - Like panty liners, adult diapers, and plastic-coated underwear might help, too. You can find products like these in drugstores or medical supply stores. Protective bedding, such as a plastic mattress protector, may also be useful.