

Appendix

Reversible Causes of Acute/Transient Urinary Incontinence: A Guide for Patients

Introduction

This guide has been developed to provide basic information about reversible causes of acute/transient urinary incontinence for patients and their caretakers. The guide provides a brief description of urinary incontinence: definition, common causes and symptoms, tips to maintain a healthy bladder, and examples of available resources.

Notify your wound, ostomy and continence (WOC) nurse or healthcare provider if you experience any of the problems or symptoms described in this guide. Discuss the tips for maintaining a healthy bladder with your WOC nurse or healthcare provider to see if you can benefit from any of the tips.

Definition: Urinary Incontinence

Urinary incontinence is a loss of control over passing urine. Urine loss can occur in very small amounts (enough to only dampen underwear), or very large amounts (requiring a change of clothing). There are many causes for loss of bladder control. Fortunately, many of these causes can be corrected.

Common Causes/Symptoms of Urine Loss in Women

- **Hormonal changes.**
 - Thinning or drying of the skin and tissues in and around the urinary opening and vagina occurs due to the loss of the hormone estrogen, which happens most often after menopause, but it can occur due to other causes such as the surgical removal of ovaries, radiation, or chemotherapy.
 - Lack of estrogen can cause the bladder to become irritated. It may also cause weakening of the muscle that controls the urinary opening. This may result in:
 - A need to pass urine quickly and often.
 - Pain when passing urine.
 - Difficulty holding back from passing urine.
 - Involuntary leakage of urine from the bladder.
 - Recurrent urinary infections.
- **Irritants:** perfumed bath salts, soap, menstrual products, cleansing wipes, douches, condoms, spermicides, and chlorine in pool water.

Common Causes/Symptoms of Urine Loss in Women and Men

- **Bladder infection:** Occurs when a large number of bacteria are in your bladder. It can cause the need to pass urine quickly and often. Symptoms of a bladder infection include:
 - A burning sensation or pain when passing urine.
 - Passing very small amounts of urine.
 - Waking from sleep to pass urine.
 - An urgent need to pass urine with an involuntary loss of urine.
 - The need to strain or push to pass urine.
 - Bloody urine.
 - Back pain or pain over the bladder area.

- Chills and fever.
- **Constipation or stool impaction:** Constipated or impacted stool can press on the bladder and cause:
 - A strong need to pass urine quickly and often.
 - An involuntary loss of urine.
 - Difficulty with urine leaving the bladder.
- **Muscle weakness/loss of mobility.**
 - Decreased strength of the muscles holding your bladder makes it difficult to hold urine in the bladder.
 - Decreased mobility and dexterity with a loss of function of the legs, arms, and hands make it difficult to get to the bathroom, remove clothing, and get positioned to pass urine. Loss of mobility, function, and/or dexterity can result from many chronic conditions or diseases such as arthritis, obesity, cardiovascular disease, strokes, Parkinson’s disease, multiple sclerosis, musculoskeletal trauma, etc.
- **Bladder irritants.**
 - Some substances contained in foods or drinks can irritate the bladder and create a need to pass urine right away, and may result in urine loss.
 - Major bladder irritants include caffeine, alcohol, artificial sweeteners, and acidic foods and fluids.
- **Medications.**
 - Certain medications may cause or worsen loss of bladder control. Such medicines include water pills, sleeping pills, muscle relaxants, anti-anxiety pills, blood pressure pills, cold and allergy remedies, pain pills, and pills for diarrhea.
 - Because these medications may be important to your overall health, do not change doses or stop taking any medications unless you consult with your healthcare provider.
- **Large volume of urine output.**
 - Passing very large amounts of urine is commonly caused by diabetes/high blood sugar, heart failure, water pills, caffeine, alcohol, and drinking large amounts of water and other liquids.
 - Excessive urine output at night can be caused by sleep apnea.
 - The need to pass very large amounts of urine can cause a loss of bladder control.
- **Urinary retention.**
 - Urinary retention occurs when you are unable to empty all of the urine from your bladder, which can lead to overflow and leakage.
 - Some things that cause urinary retention include an enlarged prostate gland, narrowing of the urinary opening, pelvic organ prolapse (loss of muscle support of the pelvic organs), constipation or stool impaction, medicines, spinal cord injury, a stroke, and scar tissue from bladder or prostate surgery.
 - Symptoms of urinary retention include:
 - Difficulty with starting urine flow.
 - Urine flow that stops and starts.
 - A feeling that your bladder is not empty after passing urine.
 - Straining to pass urine.
 - Involuntary urine loss and/or dribbling urine.
 - A strong need to pass urine quickly.
 - Recurrent urinary tract infections.
 - Waking frequently during the night to urinate.

- **Mental, emotional, or psychological changes.**
 - Delirium is confusion that happens quickly. It can happen within hours to a few days.
 - Causes of delirium include serious illness such as a stroke, infection, surgery and anesthesia, hospitalization, and reactions to medicines.
 - Delirium can make it difficult to know when and where you need to pass urine, which can lead to involuntary urine loss.
 - Depression/feelings of sadness may interfere with your ability to recognize and respond to the need to pass urine, which may cause urine loss.

Tips to Maintain a Healthy Bladder

- Empty your bladder an average of every 3 to 4 hours while awake to maintain dryness and prevent any mishaps.
- Drink enough liquids.
 - Drink 6 to 8 (8 ounce) glasses of fluid per day (if tolerated) such as water and decaffeinated or non-alcoholic beverages.
 - Avoid drinking more than 10 ounces of liquid at any one time or more than 3 quarts per day.
 - Limit fluid intake after 6:00 p.m.
 - Limit or eliminate the use of irritants, which may be the cause of incontinence such as coffee, tea, chocolate, colas, artificial sweeteners, and alcohol.
- Take note and limit any foods or fluids that may irritate your bladder such as citrus fruits.
- Include adequate fiber in your diet (20 grams or more per day) by increasing the intake of whole grain bread or cereal, fruits, and vegetables. You may also need to use a powder or pill form of fiber.
- Avoid use of known irritants in hygiene products (perfumed toilet paper, soaps, powders, feminine sprays, vaginal cleansers, bubble baths), and highly chlorinated pool water.
- If using condoms, use lubricated condoms without a spermicide.
- Establish a regular bowel routine.
 - Do not put off the urge to move your bowels.
 - Choose a regular time to move your bowels, such as after breakfast.
 - Make sure you have privacy and that your feet are on the floor or a footstool when sitting on the toilet.
 - Use habits that encourage elimination, such as drinking a warm beverage.
- Participate in regular, moderate exercise such as walking.
- Quit smoking tobacco and/or using other tobacco products.
- Contact your healthcare provider if you experience any change in your bladder or bowel habits.
- Women who have persistent vaginal and urinary symptoms due to menopause should discuss their symptoms with a healthcare provider and consider if vaginal estrogen is appropriate to use.

Examples of Available Resources

The following organizations may provide information to help you learn more about urinary incontinence:

- **Interstitial Cystitis Association**
www.ichelp.org
703-442-2070
- **National Association for Continence (NAFC)**
www.nafc.org
800-252-3337, toll free
- **National Kidney and Urologic Diseases Information Clearinghouse (NKUDIC)**
www.niddk.nih.gov
800-891-5390, toll free
- **The Simon Foundation for Continence**
www.simonfoundation.org
800-237-4666, toll free
- **Urology Care Foundation**
www.urologyhealth.org
800-828-7899, toll free