

Information about urinary incontinence: Helping you decide what is right for you

What is urinary incontinence (UI)?



Taking Control (5-minute video)

Click on the video above for an introduction to urinary incontinence and the features on this Web site.

[\(View video in a new window\)](#)



Are there other women like me? (8-minute video)

Urinary incontinence happens to women of all ages and races. Click on the video above to watch a scene in which women like you discuss this common problem.

[\(View video in a new window\)](#)

Urinary incontinence (UI) is a condition in which urine leaks by accident. Although both men and women can have UI, women get it twice as often as men. Millions of women all over the world, both young and old, experience UI. **This decision aid is meant only for women.** It does not cover treatments involving surgery.

There are two types of UI that are common in women:

- **Stress incontinence:** You cannot "hold" your urine when coughing, sneezing, exercising, or lifting something. The result is leaking or wetting.
- **Urgency incontinence:** You often have a strong urge to urinate and cannot make it to the bathroom before your urine leaks.

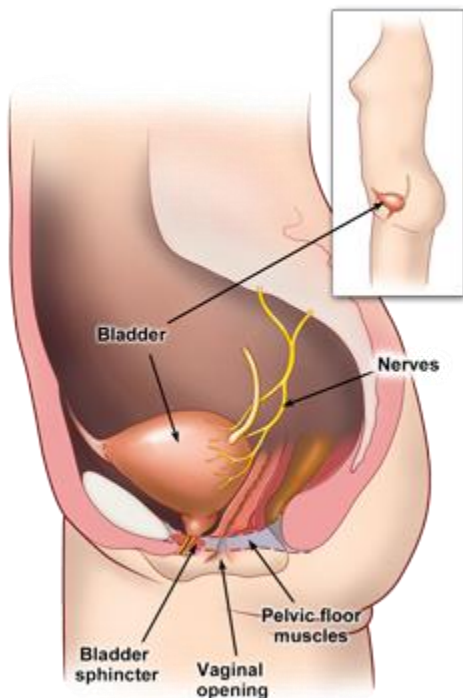
Some women have both kinds of incontinence. This is called "mixed incontinence."

Having UI can affect how you feel about yourself. It can limit your ability to enjoy work or other activities. Untreated UI can lead to skin rashes and urinary tract infections. The good news is that many women are able to improve or completely stop their urine leaking with treatment.

Why do I have UI?

UI happens because of problems with the muscles and nerves that help to hold or release your urine.

Stress incontinence can happen when the muscles under your pelvis that help control urination (called "pelvic floor muscles") become weak, causing a loss of control of these muscles. Stress incontinence can also happen if the small ring of muscles that hold the bladder closed (called the "bladder sphincter") becomes weak and allows urine to leak out.



Urgency incontinence can happen when the nerves that control the bladder muscles cause those muscles to spasm. It can also happen if the bladder muscles cannot relax enough to allow the bladder to expand to hold more urine.

Women who are more likely to have UI include women who:

- Are pregnant or have had a baby
- Are overweight
- Have had a hysterectomy (surgery to remove your uterus)
- Are older

Some medicines can increase the chance of having UI. You may want to ask your doctor to review your medicines.

What are my treatment options?

There are several types of treatments for UI:

- Special exercises
- Bladder training
- Medicines
- Medical devices

The type of exercise, device, or medicine your doctor may recommend depends on whether you have stress, urgency, or mixed incontinence. Only your doctor can tell you which type of UI you have. The goal of your treatment may be to stop leaking urine completely or to reduce the amount of urgency or leaking.

Some research found that women who are very overweight were able to improve their UI symptoms by losing weight and exercising.

While you are treating UI, you can manage urine leakage by:

- Scheduling regular bathroom breaks
- Sitting or working near an exit or bathroom when possible
- Wearing pads inside your underwear

How is stress incontinence treated?



What are Kegel exercises? (For stress incontinence) (5-minute video)

Watch the video for more information about Kegel exercises.

[\(View video in a new window\)](#)

Stress UI can be treated with Kegel exercises, medical devices, or medicines. You may need to try several treatments before finding what works best for you.

Select each treatment in the table below to learn more about it. The table lists the benefits and side effects of each treatment.

Select the buttons under the benefits and side effects of each treatment to learn more. The higher the number of women out of 10 that saw a result, the more likely you are to see the same result. These are general estimates. Every person may respond differently.

Exercises	Benefits		Side Effects
	Stopped leaking	Had less leaking	
Pelvic floor muscle training (PFMT) or Kegel exercises	3 in 10	4 in 10	Not known
PFMT with biofeedback	4 to 5 in 10	4 in 10	Not known
Medical Devices			
Vaginal weights and inserts	Not known	Not known	Not known
Electrical stimulation	2 in 10	2 in 10	Not known
Magnetic stimulation	Not known	3 in 10	Not known
Medicines			
Topical estrogen	Not known	Not known	Not known
Duloxetine (Cymbalta®)	Not known	Less than 1 in 10	Less than 1 to 2 in 10

How is urgency incontinence treated?



What is bladder training? (For urgency incontinence) (3-minute video)

Watch the video for more information about bladder training.
([View video in a new window](#))

Urgency UI can be treated with bladder training, medical devices, or medicines. You may need to try several treatments before finding what works best for you.

Select each treatment in the table below to learn more about it. The table lists the benefits and side effects of each treatment.

Select the buttons under the benefits and side effects of each treatment to learn more. The higher the number of women out of 10 that saw a result, the more likely you are to see the same result. These are general estimates. Every person may respond differently.

Training and Devices		Benefits		Side Effects
Bladder Training		Stopped leaking	Had less leaking	
Bladder training, or scheduled urination		Not known	4 in 10	Not known
Medical Devices				
Percutaneous tibial nerve stimulation (PTNS)		Not known	3 in 10	Possible

About Urgency Incontinence Medicines

All of the medicines for urgency incontinence work about the same.
About 1 to 2 out of every 10 women who take one of these medicines

All of the medicines for urgency incontinence have side effects. The most common side effect is dry mouth. Constipation is the next most common side effect. Blurred vision and dry eyes are other possible side effects, but

About Urgency Incontinence Medicines

had less leaking or stopped leaking urine completely. The table below lists the results of research studies that looked at how these medicines can help improve or stop urgency incontinence.

these do not happen as often. Some of these medicines can also cause upset stomach, nausea, or other side effects. The table below lists the results of research studies that looked at the specific side effects that can happen while taking a medicine for urgency incontinence.

Medicines	Benefits		Side Effects				
	Stopped leaking	Had less leaking	Dry mouth	Constipation	Dry eyes	Upset stomach	Other
<u>Darifenacin (Enablex®)</u>	<u>Not known</u>	<u>1 in 10</u>	<u>2 in 10</u>	<u>1 in 10</u>	<u>Not known</u>	<u>Less than 1 in 10</u>	<u>Possible</u>
<u>Fesoterodine (Toviaz®)</u>	<u>1 in 10</u>	<u>1 in 10</u>	<u>2 in 10</u>	<u>1 in 10</u>	<u>1 in 10</u>	<u>Not known</u>	<u>Possible</u>
<u>Oxybutynin (Ditropan®)</u>	<u>1 in 10</u>	<u>2 in 10</u>	<u>3 to 4 in 10</u>	<u>None</u>	<u>Not known</u>	<u>1 in 10</u>	<u>Possible</u>
<u>Solifenacin (VESicare®)</u>	<u>1 in 10</u>	<u>2 in 10</u>	<u>1 to 2 in 10</u>	<u>1 in 10</u>	<u>Not known</u>	<u>Less than 1 in 10</u>	<u>1 in 10</u>
<u>Tolterodine (Detrol®)</u>	<u>1 in 10</u>	<u>1 in 10</u>	<u>1 in 10</u>	<u>1 in 10</u>	<u>Not known</u>	<u>1 in 10</u>	<u>Possible</u>
<u>Trospium (Sanctura®)</u>	<u>1 in 10</u>	<u>None</u>	<u>1 in 10</u>	<u>Less than 1 in 10</u>	<u>1 in 10</u>	<u>None</u>	<u>Possible</u>

How do I decide?

Here are some issues a woman might consider when deciding about treatment options for UI. There may be other issues important to you that are not listed here. For each question, check the response that best describes how you feel. **You can print your responses on the next page.**

1. If you experienced fewer UI episodes because of your treatment, but you were not able stop leaking urine completely, you would:
 - ☐ Consider this treatment a success.
 - ☐ Continue your current treatment, but look into other treatment options.

- ☐ Stop the treatment.
- 2. How would you feel if you had to go to your doctor's office for your UI treatment?
 - ☐ I would not mind this.
 - ☐ I would prefer not to go to my doctor's office, but it's not that big of a deal.
 - ☐ I do not want to go to my doctor's office for treatment.
- 3. How do you feel about treating your UI by taking a pill every day?
 - ☐ Sounds great to me!
 - ☐ I guess I could give it a try.
 - ☐ I do not want to take a pill every day.
- 4. How important is it to you to avoid the most common side effects of the medicines used to treat UI (dry mouth, constipation, blurred vision, and dry eyes)?
 - ☐ Not important.
 - ☐ Somewhat important.
 - ☐ Very important.
 - ☐ I only have stress incontinence, so these medicines are not appropriate for me.
- 5. How do you feel about treating your UI by doing Kegel exercises 3 times a day for 5 minutes (15 minutes total) every day?
 - ☐ Sounds great to me!
 - ☐ I guess I could give it a try.
 - ☐ I cannot do Kegel exercises.
 - ☐ I only have urgency incontinence; Kegel exercises are not an appropriate treatment for me.

What should I ask my doctor?

You and your doctor should decide together which treatment is right for you.

It is important to tell your doctor what matters most to you. Check the statements or questions below that are most important to you so you can discuss them together. These items will also appear in the information summary at the end of this decision aid.

1. Ask Questions

Asking the right questions can help you and your doctor decide which option is right for you. Here are some questions you may want to ask:

- ☐ What do you think about the different UI treatments?
- ☐ Given my UI symptoms, which of these options is most likely to work for me?

- ☐ How long will I need to use the treatments?
- ☐ How long will it take to see a difference, and when do I see you if I want to try something different?
- ☐ Will any of these treatments interact with other medicines or supplements that I take?
- ☐ What are the costs of treatment?
- ☐ Are there less expensive options that we can try first? Why or why not?
- ☐ Are there any newer treatments I should know about?

2. **Share Your Concerns**

It is okay to be concerned about the decisions you have to make because of your UI. Here are some examples of concerns you might have:

- ☐ I am worried that I will not be able to do Kegel exercises correctly.
- ☐ I am worried that I do not have time to do Kegel exercises.
- ☐ I am worried about the potential side effects of treatment.
- ☐ I am worried about possibly having to be treated for the rest of my life.

3. **Share Your Preferences**

Here are some examples of things you might want to tell your doctor:

- ☐ I am willing to take a pill every day.
- ☐ I am willing to come to my doctor's office for clinic visits.
- ☐ I prefer having my treatment prescribed rather than having to do exercises on my own.