

## INTRODUCTION TO URINARY INCONTINENCE

Urinary incontinence (also called UI) is the inability to hold urine in the bladder, which results in accidental leakage. Incontinence can occur at any age and is a relatively common problem. The good news is that, with appropriate treatment, the problem usually can be eliminated or much improved.

### TYPES OF URINARY INCONTINENCE

There are four main types: stress, urge, mixed, and overflow. The following questions will help identify which type of UI you have.

**Please read the following questions; then check the box beside the one that *best* describes your difficulty. During the last 3 months, did you leak urine *most often*:**

Most often when you were performing some physical activity such as coughing, sneezing, lifting or exercise? **(stress)**

Most often when you had the urge or the feeling that you need to empty your bladder, but you could not get to the toilet fast enough? **(urge)**

Equally as often with physical activity as with a sense of urgency? **(mixed)**

Even without physical activity and without a sense of urgency? **(other)**

**Show this to your doctor when you return for your follow-up appointment. Talking about your own voiding pattern will help your doctor determine what specific treatments are likely to be of most benefit.**

### WHAT YOU CAN DO

Even before you know for sure what type you have, the strategies listed below may help improve your symptoms:

- Relax and don't strain when voiding or emptying your bowels
- Keep bowel movements regular
- If you drink a lot of fluids, limiting your fluid intake in the evening may help with nighttime voiding
- Reduce or eliminate alcoholic beverages, carbonated beverages, coffee and/or tea, citrus juice and fruits, and/or tomato products to see if your symptoms improve
- Be sure to get daily moderate physical activity
- In women, losing weight and quitting smoking may decrease UI
- Ask your doctor if any of your medications could be contributing to your symptoms

### VOIDING DIARY

Filling out a voiding diary can provide information to help tailor your treatment according to your pattern. This is especially important if you void very frequently (every 1 or 2 hours), if you experience an unusual sense of urgency (needing to pass urine promptly), or if you are not able to get to the bathroom in time to prevent leakage. A voiding diary can be as simple as a plain sheet of paper used to write down an hourly record of all voids and all urine leaks. Some patients prefer prepared forms. These more detailed voiding diary forms are available from your doctor or on the internet at the websites below (which also provide other helpful information):

Canadian Continence Foundation [www.continence-fdn.ca](http://www.continence-fdn.ca)

BC Health Guide [www.bchealthguide.org/kbase/media/pdf/hw/form\\_aa137606.pdf](http://www.bchealthguide.org/kbase/media/pdf/hw/form_aa137606.pdf)

American Urogynecologic Society <[www.augs.org/files/public/vdiary.pdf](http://www.augs.org/files/public/vdiary.pdf)>

Royal Womens Hospital, Australia <[www.rwh.org.au/emplibrary/rwhcpg/Urinary\\_Diary.pdf](http://www.rwh.org.au/emplibrary/rwhcpg/Urinary_Diary.pdf)>

The diary should be kept for at least two or three days, during a period of daily life that is typical for you.

**Information specifically about incontinence in men can be found at**  
[www.bchealthguide.org](http://www.bchealthguide.org) > Incontinence > Urinary Incontinence in Men  
<http://kidney.niddk.nih.gov/kudiseases/pubs/uimen/index.htm>

*Adapted from:* Behavioural therapies for urinary incontinence. ICES 2000 (5):[3] Available from: URL:[www.ices.on.ca](http://www.ices.on.ca)  
DuBeau CE. Patient Information: Urinary Incontinence. Uptodate consumer database 2005  
Available from: URL:[http://patients.uptodate.com/print.asp?print=true&file=gen\\_hlth/6576](http://patients.uptodate.com/print.asp?print=true&file=gen_hlth/6576)

© The Foundation for Medical Practice Education, [www.fmpe.org](http://www.fmpe.org)

February 2007



