

Men's Frequently Asked Questions

How Does the Bladder Work?

Every time you eat or drink your body absorbs liquids. Your kidneys' job is to filter waste products from these fluids and make urine. A continuous trickle passes from the kidneys to the bladder, which slowly expands. When the bladder is full a signal goes to the brain indicating the need to go to the bathroom. Once the toilet is reached the brain then tells the large bladder muscle to squeeze and contract. At the same time it tells the support muscles (or pelvic floor muscles) that surround the urethra (the outlet from the bladder) to relax and let the urine pass.

How often do most people empty their bladder?

Usually between four and eight times a day.

How common is incontinence in men?

Because incontinence is not something you tend to discuss with your friends, it often seems rarer than it is. In fact it is really quite common, particularly among men who have an enlarged prostate or who have had prostate surgery, but there are other causes too.

I'm relatively young and have a weak bladder. Isn't this something that only affects old people?

Many men have difficulty urinating for a variety of reasons, regardless of age. Sometimes those who've had prostate surgery experience weak bladders for a limited period (around a year). Heavy smokers can also be susceptible, mainly because they cough more frequently than non-smokers. Even young boys with penile inflammation can be affected. Other aggravating factors include alcohol, coffee or tea, but it largely depends on the individual. So, as you can see, age is far from being the only factor.

What can be done about urine loss?

For men with stress or urge incontinence, Kegel or pelvic floor exercises can reduce leaks in just 2 to 4 months and may even eliminate them within a year. They're simple to do, and because no one can tell when you're doing them, you can get your muscles into shape anywhere, at any time.

If I drink less fluid, will things improve?

It's tricky really because taking in less fluid will make your urine more concentrated and irritate your bladder, causing you to urinate more often. However drinking excessive amounts can lead to distension of the bladder. The best advice we can give is simply to drink when you feel like it and allow your body to regulate your liquid requirements.

My symptoms are different than those I have read about. What should I do?

This site deals with the most prevalent forms of incontinence, but everyone is unique and it can be tricky to diagnose your condition. Therefore our best advice would be to speak to your doctor.

* The site does not offer medical advice and nothing contained in the site is intended to constitute professional advice for medical diagnosis or treatment.

Types of Incontinence in Men

The main types of incontinence in men are described below. We have used the correct medical term so you will recognize it when talking to your doctor.

Urge Incontinence

Also known as an overactive bladder, this is the most common incontinence type for men. You experience a sudden urge to urinate and the bladder involuntarily expels urine. This is usually due to interference in the nerve signals between bladder and brain, often linked to either an enlarged prostate or the aftermath of prostate surgery.

You may also find that you need to urinate more frequently than the usual 4-8 times a day, and maybe also at night too. However, in certain cases you can 'train' your bladder to urinate less frequently and to avoid urinating at night.

Stress Incontinence

Around 10% of male incontinence occurs with a sudden physical exertion such as coughing, sneezing, laughing, exercise or heavy lifting. It usually only involves small amounts and is generally connected to a weakening of the pelvic floor muscles. To find exercises that can strengthen the pelvic floor go to [Exercises to Help with Incontinence](#).

Mixed Incontinence

Some 10-30% of men experience mixed symptoms. Usually it's a combination of Stress Incontinence and Urge Incontinence. If you happen to have both incontinence types, there's usually one that causes more of a problem than the other, so you should focus on dealing with the most frequent symptom first.

Post-Micturition Dribble

This is when the bladder doesn't empty completely and continues to leak after urinating. This is also common with an enlarged prostate or weakened pelvic floor muscles.

Overflow Incontinence

This is a constant or episodic flow of urine, usually caused by an obstruction or nerve damage. If you're experiencing this, it's probably best to get it checked out by your doctor, as they are the best people to diagnose this type of male incontinence.

Functional Incontinence

This is an inability to reach the bathroom in time because of the difficulties caused by physical or mental illness.

Neurological Bladder Disorders

Damage to the nerves as a result of illness (such as Parkinson's Disease, Multiple Sclerosis or brain injury) can affect the way the brain and bladder communicate. This results in an inability to control the bladder or empty it completely.

If you're unsure of your symptoms

You will realize by now that there are many types of incontinence in men. Certainly, everyone's experience is different. So if you're unsure of your symptoms, it might be a good idea to keep a diary recording your urination pattern for a week so you can monitor what happens. You'll then have a record to discuss with your doctor or continence advisor should you wish to.

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