

Urinary incontinence

After women have experienced the menopause, urinary incontinence (UI), the complaint of any involuntary leakage of urine, is the most frequent symptom of the lower urinary tract. It affects millions of women worldwide and prevalence increases with age. Despite this high prevalence, urinary incontinence remains under-diagnosed and under-treated.

Types of incontinence

- Stress incontinence is the complaint of involuntary loss of urine during exercise or coughing.
- Urge incontinence is the complaint of involuntary loss of urine associated with a compelling desire to pass urine.
- Mixed incontinence is the complaint of involuntary loss of urine associated with urgency and also with effort or physical exertion or on sneezing or coughing.

Assessment

- Severity and frequency of symptoms and pad use
- Taking a medical history (previous surgery and radiotherapy may be particularly pertinent)
- Exclusion of reversible causes such as urinary tract infections, excessive fluid intake, taking diuretics
- Urine testing for glucose and blood (especially to test for haematuria)
- Evaluation of post-void urinary residual volume
- Pelvic examination
- Urodynamic studies

Conservative management

- Smoking cessation
- Weight loss
- Management of constipation
- Timed voiding during the day
- Management of fluid intake
- Reduction of caffeine and alcohol intake
- Bladder training
- Pelvic floor muscle training
- Vaginal estrogens
- Anticholinergic drugs and mirabegron (a beta-3 agonist)
- Onabotulinum toxin A
- Sacral neuromodulation
- Posterior tibial nerve stimulation

Other strategies

- Laser therapy (though more evidence from randomized trials is required)
- Mid-urethral slings (though complications involving exposure and erosion restrict the use of these synthetic meshes)
- Urethral bulking injections
- Retropubic surgical suspensions

Up to half of women may not report incontinence to their healthcare provider. This may be due to embarrassment or to the belief that urinary incontinence is a normal part of aging.

Further information

Management of urinary incontinence in postmenopausal women: An EMAS clinical guide [https://www.maturitas.org/article/S0378-5122\(20\)30367-4/fulltext](https://www.maturitas.org/article/S0378-5122(20)30367-4/fulltext)