

Doctor Needs To Know

What Your Incontinence Doctor Needs to Know?

How do I tell my health care team about my urine leakage?

Talking about bladder control problems is not easy for some people. You may feel embarrassed to tell your doctor. But talking about the problem is the first step in finding an answer. Also, you can be sure your doctor has heard it all before. You will not shock or embarrass your doctor or nurse.

Medical History

You can prepare for your visit to the doctor's office by gathering the information your doctor will need to understand your problem. Make a list of the medicines you are taking. Include prescription medicines and those you buy over the counter, like aspirin or antacid. List the fluids you drink regularly, including sodas, coffee, tea, and alcohol. Tell the doctor how much of each drink you have in an average day.

Finding a Doctor

You will need to find a doctor who is skilled in helping women with urine leakage. If your primary doctor shrugs off your problem as normal aging, for example, ask for a referral to a specialist—a urogynecologist or a urologist who specializes in treating female urinary problems. You may need to be persistent, or you may need to look to organizations to help locate a doctor in your area.

Make a note of any recent surgeries or illnesses you have had. Let the doctor know how many children you have had. These events may or may not be related to your bladder control problem.

Finally, keep track of the times when you have urine leakage. Note what you were doing at the time. Were you coughing, laughing, sneezing, or exercising?

Did you have an uncontrollable urge to urinate when you hear running water?

Physical Exam

The doctor will give you a physical exam to look for any health issues that may be causing your bladder control problem. Checking your reflexes can show possible nerve damage. You will give a urine sample so the doctor can check for a urinary tract infection. For women, the exam may include a pelvic exam. Tests may also include taking an ultrasound picture of your bladder. Or the doctor may examine the inside of your bladder using a cystoscope, a long, thin tube that slides up into the bladder through the urethra.

Bladder Function Tests

Your exam may include one or more tests that involve filling the bladder with

warm fluid to measure the pressure at which leakage may occur. One simple test is called a stress test. You simply relax and then cough strongly to see if urine escapes.

Any medical test can be uncomfortable. Bladder testing may sound embarrassing, but the health professionals who perform the tests will try to make you feel comfortable and give you as much privacy as possible.

This information will help your doctor understand your bladder control problem.

I take these prescription medicines:

medicine: _____ dose: _____

medicine: _____ dose: _____

medicine: _____ dose: _____

I take these over-the-counter drugs (such as Tylenol, aspirin, or Maalox):

medicine: _____ dose: _____

medicine: _____ dose: _____

medicine: _____ dose: _____

If you take more medicines, please list them on a separate paper.

I started having bladder trouble
within the past few months

1 to 2 years ago

_____ years ago

Number of babies I have had: _____

Dates: _____

My periods stopped—menopause.

Date: _____

I had an operation.

Date: _____

Type of operation: _____

I recently hurt myself or have been sick.

Date: _____

Type of injury or illness: _____

I recently had a bladder—urinary tract—infection.

Date: _____

Check the ones that applies:

I smoke cigarettes. _____

I have pain or a burning feeling when I urinate. _____

I often have a really strong urge to urinate right away. _____

Sometimes my bladder feels full, even after I finish urinating. _____

I go to the bathroom often, but very little urine comes out. _____

I don't go out with friends or family because I worry about leaking urine.

The first thing I do at new places is check the bathroom location. _____

I worry about being put in a nursing home because of bladder control problems.

I have, or had, these medical problems:

cancer _____

depression _____

crippling arthritis _____

diverticulitis _____

diabetes _____

multiple sclerosis _____

interstitial cystitis _____

stroke _____

spinal cord injury _____

urinary infection _____

other _____