

What is urinary incontinence?¹

Urinary incontinence is a loss of bladder control, meaning you can't always control when you urinate. According to the National Association for Continence, over 33 million Americans are affected by urinary incontinence.¹ While urinary incontinence is common in older adults, it is not a normal part of aging.

Many people feel uncomfortable discussing bladder issues—but your doctor is there to help. Together, you can find a plan that supports your health and confidence.

Different types of doctors that may be able to help include:

- **Primary care physician** – helps manage your overall health.
- **Urologist** – treats problems with the urinary system.
- **Gynecologist or obstetrician** – cares for women's reproductive health, including during pregnancy and after childbirth.
- **Urogynecologist** – specializes in bladder and pelvic issues in women.

Causes of urinary incontinence

Urinary incontinence happens when the bladder muscles squeeze at the wrong time or the muscles that hold in urine aren't strong enough.

In women, pregnancy, childbirth and menopause are common causes of incontinence.² In men, an enlarged prostate may be the cause.³

Other causes may include:⁶

- Chronic constipation
- Medications
- Infections like urinary tract infections
- Nerve damage
- Caffeine and alcohol
- Excess weight

Sources

1. "Urinary Incontinence Overview," National Association for Continence, last accessed Sept. 4, 2025, www.nafc.org/urinary-incontinence.
2. "Incontinence Patient Guide," Urology Care Foundation, last accessed Sept. 4, 2025. Available at: www.urologyhealth.org
3. "Urinary Incontinence in Older Adults," National Institute on Aging, last accessed Sept. 4, 2025, www.nia.nih.gov/health/urinary-incontinence-older-adults.
4. "Urinary Incontinence," Mayo Clinic, last accessed Sept. 4, 2025, www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/urinary-incontinence/diagnosis-treatment/drc-20352814.
5. "Urinary Incontinence," U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office on Women's Health, last accessed Sept. 4, 2025, <https://www.womenshealth.gov/a-z-topics/urinary-incontinence>
6. "Urinary Incontinence," Mayo Clinic, last accessed Sept. 4, 2025, <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/urinary-incontinence/symptoms-causes/syc-20352808>.
7. "Caring for Your Skin When You Have Incontinence," National Association for Continence, last accessed Sept. 4, 2025, <https://nafc.org/skin-care>



Gain confidence and control over your bladder health

The more you understand about your bladder, the better you can manage your health. If you're living with urinary incontinence, talk to your doctor. Together, you and your doctor can come up with a plan to improve bladder control.

Types of incontinence

There are many different types of urinary incontinence.⁶

Stress	Leaks happen during physical movements like coughing, laughing or exercise.
Urge	You feel a strong need to go and may or may not make it to the bathroom in time.
Overflow	Your bladder doesn't fully empty, causing leaks.
Functional	Normal urine control but physical or mental challenges make it hard to get to the bathroom.
Mixed	A combination of types, often stress and urge.

Treating incontinence

The good news is that urinary incontinence can often be treated. How it is treated largely depends on the type, cause and severity of the problem.

Bladder training

Talk to your doctor to learn more about the bladder control training methods listed below.

Technique	How it works
Pelvic floor muscle exercises³	• Pelvic floor muscle exercises may help improve bladder control by strengthening the muscles that hold in urine. Talk to your doctor to learn if these exercises are right for you and how to do them safely.

Timed or double voiding⁴	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Timed voiding involves urinating on a set schedule (e.g., going to the bathroom every one to two hours and gradually extending the time between bathroom trips).• Double voiding involves urinating, then waiting a few minutes and trying to urinate again.
Delayed urination⁴	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Holding off going to the bathroom when you get the urge to go; start by delaying by just five or 10 minutes each time you get the urge, with the ultimate goal being to extend the time between trips to the bathroom.

Lifestyle changes

Making some safe, easy, effective and inexpensive changes to your lifestyle habits may also help improve bladder control.⁵

Talk to your doctor about the following lifestyle changes:

- **Maintain a healthy weight.** Extra weight puts added pressure on your bladder and your pelvic floor muscles.
- **Quit smoking.** Smoking is associated with more frequent and severe episodes of incontinence.
- **Avoid alcohol and caffeine.** These beverages may contribute to leakage.
- **Prevent constipation.** Stay active, eat plenty of fiber-rich foods and drink enough fluids to avoid constipation.
- **Drink the right amount of water for your body.** Ask your doctor how much is best for you. Drinking too much or too little can affect bladder health.
- **Keep a clear path to the bathroom.** Remove clutter to help prevent falls and make it easier to get there quickly.

Other options

- **Keep your skin healthy and prevent infection.** Urine can cause skin problems like rashes or sores.⁷ To help protect your skin, gently clean the area where urine leaves the body. Your doctor may suggest using a mild soap or a skin product like petroleum jelly. If you notice a strong urine smell, ask your doctor about ways to manage it.
- **Stay prepared.** Disposable pads shaped like underwear can help keep clothes dry. It's a good idea to carry a change of clothes and know where bathrooms are when you're out.
- **Explore medical treatments.** In some cases, your doctor may suggest medications or medical devices to help manage urinary incontinence.⁴



There are a variety of treatment options for urinary incontinence, so partner with your doctor to find what works best for you.