

Managing Loss of Bladder Control

The bladder is a balloon-shaped organ in your lower abdomen. It stores and empties urine. You can lose control of your bladder and leak urine. This is called *urinary incontinence (UI)*. UI can become more common as a man ages. UI is a treatable medical problem.

There are three kinds of UI:

- Stress incontinence** is leaking urine when you put pressure on your bladder by sneezing, coughing, or lifting
- Urge incontinence** is leaking urine when you cannot stop an urge to urinate
- Overflow incontinence** is constantly dribbling urine and frequently urinating in small amounts

What causes UI in men?

- Certain muscles and nerves work together to let you control when urine leaves your bladder. Nerve damage can lead to UI. Many conditions can cause nerve damage, including diabetes, stroke, Parkinson's disease, multiple sclerosis, and spinal cord injury.
- An enlarged prostate, called *benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH)*, can cause urge incontinence. The prostate is a walnut-sized gland just below your bladder and surrounding the urethra. It produces the fluid part of semen. Urine flows out from your bladder through a tube called the urethra. The prostate often enlarges as a man ages. As it grows, it may squeeze the urethra and affect the flow of urine.
- Some other conditions can cause UI or make it worse, including:
 - Urinary tract infection
 - Certain medications
 - Overactive bladder
 - Delirium
 - Certain surgeries
 - Constipation
 - Dehydration (loss of body fluid)
 - Weakness in certain muscles involved in urination

How is UI diagnosed?

- To diagnose UI, your provider may:
 - Ask about your medical history and your problem with UI
 - Ask you to keep a diary of fluids you drink, trips to the bathroom, and leakage
 - Do a physical exam
- Your provider may ask you to have other studies, such as:
 - Tests to measure nerve and muscle activity
 - Tests to measure the bladder's ability to function
 - Ultrasound (using sound waves) to picture your interior organs

How is UI treated?

Treatment depends on the type and severity of UI. To treat your UI, your provider may:

- Ask you to change certain behaviors, such as:
 - Limiting fluids at certain times
 - Planning trips to the bathroom at regular intervals
 - Exercising to strengthen muscles around the bladder
- Make changes to other medicines that can affect bladder control, such as water pills (diuretics) for high blood pressure
- Consider certain medicines that help treat the problem
- Recommend surgery

Talk with your healthcare provider about managing your urinary symptoms.