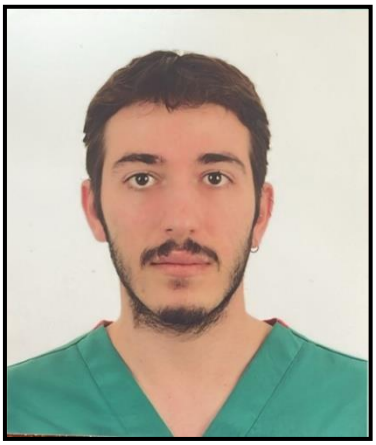
PATIENT EDUCATION FORMS



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Urinary Incontinence

Pelvic Floor (Kegel) Exercises

Surgery to Treat Stress Incontinence in Women

Treatments for Urge Incontinence in Women

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Patient Education: Treatments for Urge Incontinence in Women (The Basics)

What is urge incontinence? — "Incontinence" is a medical term for leaking urine or losing bladder control. People with urge incontinence feel a sudden strong need or "urge" to urinate. Often, this urge is so strong that they can't reach the toilet in time. "Overactive bladder" is another term used for having sudden and frequent urges to urinate. People with an overactive bladder may or may not leak urine.

Urge incontinence is common, especially in women. But there are treatments that can help. There are also things you can do on your own to stop or reduce urine leakage, so you don't have to "just live with it."

Are there things I can do on my own for urge incontinence? — Yes. Some steps that can help reduce urine leakage or urges include:

- Cut down on any foods or drinks that worsen your symptoms. Alcohol, caffeine, spicy or acidic foods, or artificial sweeteners can cause some people to urinate more often or have sudden urges.
- Try not to drink too much right before bed.
- Prevent constipation – Constipation is a common problem that makes bowel movements difficult. It can make urge incontinence worse.

You can also try some things to help with bladder control:

- Bladder training – Bladder training involves going to the toilet at scheduled times to help your bladder hold more urine. For example, you might decide to go to the toilet every hour. Then you force yourself to go every hour, even if you don't think you need to. After getting used to waiting 1 hour, you can try waiting longer between toilet visits. Over time, you can "retrain" your bladder to wait 3 or 4 hours between visits.

- Relaxation can help manage the urge to go. When you feel an urge, stop or sit down. Take a deep breath, tighten your pelvic muscles, and let the "wave" of needing to go pass. Then slowly walk to the toilet and urinate.
- Pelvic floor exercises – Pelvic floor exercises strengthen the muscles that control urine flow. These exercises can help, but people often do them incorrectly. Ask your doctor or nurse how to do the exercises correctly.

How do doctors treat urge incontinence in women? — In addition to bladder training, relaxation, and pelvic floor exercises, treatment sometimes includes medications and sometimes procedures. These are discussed in more detail below.

Medications that relax the bladder – These medications can help control symptoms. Medications include oxybutynin (brand name: Ditropan), tolterodine (brand name: Detrol), fesoterodine (brand name: Toviaz), solifenacin (brand name: VESIcare), darifenacin (brand name: Enablex), and mirabegron (brand name: Mirbetriq). They come as tablets taken by mouth, patches, or gels applied to the skin.

Medications for urge incontinence can have the following side effects:

- Very dry mouth
- Constipation
- Heartburn
- Difficulty thinking and remembering
- Blurred vision
- Fast heartbeat
- Feeling sleepy

If you are older, ask your doctor if it is safe to take these medicines. If you have trouble thinking or remembering, some of these medicines might make these problems worse.

If you are taking medication for urge incontinence or overactive bladder, you may need to try several different medicines until you find one that works for you.

Vaginal estrogen – If medicines that relax the bladder do not work for you or cause too many side effects, your doctor may discuss other treatments. For some women who experience vaginal dryness after menopause, vaginal estrogen can help with these issues as well as bladder problems.

Procedures to help relax the bladder – If medicines do not relieve your symptoms or you cannot take medicines, your doctor may suggest procedures such as:

- Injection of botulinum toxin (Botox) into the bladder to help relax it – The injection needs to be done once or twice a year. About 1 in 4 women who use these injections may have trouble urinating.
- Treatment with electrical nerve stimulation – This is done with a device placed under the skin, like a pacemaker. Electrical stimulation sends mild electrical signals to the nerves affecting the bladder. These signals do not hurt. This treatment can help with sudden urges or frequent need to urinate. You may need follow-up procedures after the device is placed.

How effective are treatments for urge incontinence in women? — This depends on your symptoms and the cause of your urge incontinence. For example, if you have another medical condition (such as diabetes), treating that condition may help.

Most women need to try several treatments and sometimes use more than one treatment at a time. For example, your doctor may recommend bladder training, medication to relax the bladder, and vaginal estrogen. It may take a month or longer to know if a treatment is working. If you feel the treatment is not working quickly enough, try not to lose hope.

What will my life be like? — Most women need some form of treatment for urge incontinence for a long time or for life. Treatment for urge incontinence in women can help with symptoms, but it does not treat the cause of incontinence.

Even if treatment does not completely stop urge incontinence, it can make life easier and help you feel much better.