

URINARY INCONTINENCE

Loss of bladder control is called urinary incontinence. Some men develop incontinence after being treated for prostate cancer. The condition can be temporary, and it may be just a matter of time before those muscles are strong enough again to control urination, or it may be chronic and a possible long-term side effect from the cancer treatment. Regardless, help is available. There are many ways to treat incontinence.

TYPES OF INCONTINENCE

There are three types of incontinence. Each type has its own symptoms:

- When the sphincters around the urethra are weak, it is called stress incontinence. In these cases, lifting heavy objects, getting up from a chair, coughing, sneezing, or laughing may cause urine to leak. Many men can control it through the night, but may leak when they get up in the morning. Going to the bathroom more often is a good way to avoid accidents.
- Overflow incontinence occurs when the bladder is too full. Signs of overflow incontinence include getting up often during the night to urinate, taking a long time to urinate, urinating small amounts and not feeling empty, the need to urinate but being unable to, leaking urine throughout the day, and having a weak, dribbling stream with no force.
- Urge incontinence occurs when the bladder contracts too often. Wetting oneself because of not getting to a restroom quickly enough is a sign of urge incontinence. Because the bladder cannot hold the normal amount of urine, patients may feel the need to urinate every few hours, or that they have a very weak bladder. Wetting the bed at night is not uncommon.

TREATMENT FOR INCONTINENCE

Treatment of incontinence depends on the type, severity, and cause of the problem. If the incontinence cannot be completely corrected, it can still be helped. Learning how to manage and live with incontinence is important because, if left untreated, it may disrupt quality of life. Fear, anxiety, isolation, and embarrassment are common feelings in people who are incontinent. These feelings may keep a person from doing the things he loves, such as going to the park, playing golf, or picking up a grandchild. So, it's important that they speak with a health care professional to determine the best ways to resume their normal activities.

MORE HELP

There is no one right way to cope with incontinence. The challenge is to find what works for the individual. There are many incontinence products that allow people to remain active and comfortable: pads can be worn under

clothing; adult briefs and undergarments are available; and bed pads can be used to protect the bed linens and mattress.

Here are some questions to ask when choosing incontinence products:

- How much absorbency does the product provide?
- Can it be seen under normal clothing?
- Is it disposable or reusable?
- Is it comfortable when moving or sitting down?
- Which stores carry the product? Are they easy to get to?
- Does insurance pay for these products?

Most of the time urinary incontinence affects men that have had prostate cancer. There are others cancers and treatments that can cause incontinence such as cancers of the cervix, rectum, bladder and breast to name a few. The types of cancer treatments that may cause incontinence are chemo and radiation therapy, hormonal therapies and bone marrow transplants that cause vomiting and bladder cystitis.

CAN URINARY INCONTINENCE BE CURED?

Urinary incontinence can be cured by:

- Behavioral therapy
- Surgeries
- Medications

If urinary incontinence begins to affect the quality of your life talk with your health care provider.

Works Cited

Adapted from the American Cancer Society
www.cancer.org