

# Loss of Bladder Control

The bladder is the organ that holds urine. Many people with bladder control problems hide the problem from everyone, even from their doctor. There is no need to do that. In most cases, loss of bladder control can be treated. It might even be cured. If you are having bladder control problems, don't suffer in silence. It is a common problem that 10 to 40% of women have. Talk to your doctor.

## What are the kinds of bladder control problems?

Loss of bladder control is also called *urinary incontinence*.

- **Stress**—You can loose urine when you exercise, laugh, cough, sneeze, or lift heavy objects.
- **Overactive bladder/urge**—This happens when you can't hold urine for very long. You don't reach the toilet in time.
- **Overflow**—Your bladder is always full. Small amounts of urine leak from it.
- **Mixed**—Some people have more than one type of bladder control problem.

## What could cause me to lose bladder control?

Aging does not cause this problem but some kinds of sickness can cause problems with the bladder.

- Infections in the urinary tract or the vagina can make you lose bladder control.
- Some drugs can also cause bladder problems.
- You can even lose bladder control if you get constipated.
- Tumors in the brain, spinal cord, or bladder can make you lose bladder control.
- Bladder muscles might be weak or overactive.
- Nerves that control the bladder might be damaged.

## What are other problems caused by loss of bladder control?

Bladder problems can go on for a long time before a person asks for help. It can lead to other problems, like:

- Rashes, skin infections, and sores
- Urinary tract infections
- Sleeping problems
- Less social and sexual activity
- Loss of self-esteem
- Depression



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## What will my doctor or nurse do if I have loss of bladder control?

- The doctor or nurse will ask about your health history.
- He or she will do a physical exam.
- Your doctor or nurse could order some tests. These might be urine or blood tests. Another test checks how well you can empty your bladder.
- You may need to keep a daily journal and write down when you urinate and when you leak urine.

## What will the treatment be?

The treatment depends on what kind of bladder problem you have. It also depends on the cause.

Here are some treatments you could get:

- Bladder control training
- Exercises that make the pelvic floor stronger (Kegel exercises)
- Drugs
- Surgery
- Devices such as a patch, plug, or implant
- Special underpants that can hold a lot of urine

**FDA Office of Women's Health** <http://www.fda.gov/womens>

## To Learn More:

**Food and Drug Administration (FDA)**  
<http://www.fda.gov>

**National Institute on Aging (NIA)**  
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31 Center Drive, MSC 2292  
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