



LIFE AFTER PROSTATE CANCER

Managing Urinary Incontinence

Urology Care
FOUNDATION™
*The Official Foundation of the
 American Urological Association*

WHAT IS URINARY INCONTINENCE AFTER PROSTATE CANCER TREATMENT?

Urinary incontinence is urine leakage without your control. In most cases, your brain signals the muscles in the neck of your bladder to either hold or let go of urine. Surgery for prostate cancer may upset these signals and cause problems with urine control.

Men may have many types of urinary incontinence after prostate surgery.

- **Stress incontinence** – Coughing, laughing, sneezing, or exercising can strain the pelvic floor muscles, causing urine to leak. This is the most common type of urinary incontinence.
- **Urge incontinence** – You feel a sudden, urgent need to go to the bathroom, even when the bladder isn't full. This happens because the bladder is overly sensitive. Urge incontinence is also called overactive bladder.
- **Urinary frequency** – You go to the bathroom very often. You may feel the need to go every 30 to 60 minutes.
- **Mixed incontinence** – You have symptoms of more than one type of urinary incontinence.

Though incontinence can be a side effect of prostate cancer care, it is often brief. There are things you can do to help get better bladder control faster.

WHO IS AFFECTED AND HOW LONG WILL INCONTINENCE LAST?

It's common to have urinary incontinence for a time after prostate surgery. If you have stress incontinence, you may need to wear pads for a few weeks or months. In most cases, urinary control will return. Still, incontinence may last as long as 6 to 12 months. It's less likely for it to last more than a year.

HOW IS URINARY INCONTINENCE TREATED?

There are a number of treatment choices for urinary incontinence.

- **Physical therapy.** Your doctor can write you a prescription for physical therapy. Most health plans will cover it. Physical therapists may use a number of techniques to help you regain bladder control.
 - **Kegel exercises.** These exercises strengthen the pelvic floor muscles, which are vital for bladder control. Kegel exercises train them to keep urine in the bladder. If you're going to have prostate cancer surgery, your doctor may suggest that you start doing these exercises before your surgery.
 - **Biofeedback** may be used with Kegel exercises to help you judge how well the pelvic floor muscles are working and whether you're doing the exercises the right way.

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- **Neuromuscular electrical stimulation** uses a tool that sends electrical impulses to nerves. This causes muscles to contract. It may be used with Kegel exercises to help train the pelvic floor muscles to contract the right way.
- **Timed voiding** is a way to reduce urinary frequency with planned bathroom visits. It's used to help your bladder spread out so that it can hold more urine. Your nurse or doctor can help you make a plan for timed voiding.
- **Avoiding bladder irritants.** These foods and drinks can bother the bladder in some men:
 - Caffeine in coffee, tea, and sodas
 - Acidic drinks such as juices
 - Alcohol
 - Artificial sweeteners
 - Spicy foods
- **Medication** can calm bladder irritability and help reduce urine leaks.
- **Surgery** is mainly offered if return of continence is not complete after at least a year. Your doctor will talk with you about surgical choices if other treatments haven't helped with your urinary problems.
- **Products** such as pads can help reduce discomfort from urine leakage.

WHAT ARE THE SIDE EFFECTS OF INCONTINENCE TREATMENT?

Kegel exercises often do not have side effects. Your doctor can talk with you about the pros and cons of each treatment choice and help you decide what's best for you.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

It's always of great value to talk with your healthcare providers about urinary problems. Your doctors can help you decide which treatments may help, at any time.

ABOUT THE UROLOGY CARE FOUNDATION

The Urology Care Foundation is the world's leading urologic foundation – and the official foundation of the American Urological Association. We provide information for those actively managing their urologic health and those ready to make health changes. Our information is based on the American Urological Association resources and is reviewed by medical experts.

To learn more, visit the Urology Care Foundation's website, UrologyHealth.org/UrologicConditions, or go to UrologyHealth.org/FindAUrologist to find a doctor near you.

DISCLAIMER

This information is not a tool for self-diagnosis or a substitute for professional medical advice. It is not to be used or relied on for that purpose. Please talk to your urologist or health care provider about your health concerns. Always consult a health care provider before you start or stop any treatments, including medications.

For copies of printed materials about Prostate Cancer and other urologic conditions, visit UrologyHealth.org/Order or call 800-828-7866.

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