

Incontinence after Prostate Treatment

What You Should Know



What is Urinary Incontinence after Prostate 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 treatment may upset these signals and cause problems with urine control.

There are many types of urinary incontinence after prostate surgery.

- **Stress urinary incontinence (SUI)** is when urine leaks when coughing, laughing, sneezing, or even during workouts. It's caused by problems with the muscles that keep urine in the bladder.
- **Overactive bladder (OAB)** or urge incontinence is when you suddenly feel the need to pass urine and can't stop it from happening. This can happen even when the bladder isn't full.
- **Overflow incontinence** is when the bladder is too full and urine escapes through the urethra.
- **Mixed incontinence** is a blend of these different types. Rarely, people with prostates experience continuous incontinence, or not being able to control urine at any time.

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

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** may use a number of techniques to help you get back bladder control such as:
 - **Kegel exercises** may be used to strengthen the pelvic floor muscles to train them to keep urine in the bladder. Sometimes your health care team may suggest you start doing these exercises before 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.
 - **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 how often you need to pass urine. This is done by making a plan of when you pass urine. It's used to help your bladder spread out so that it can hold more urine. Your health care team can help you make a plan for timed voiding.
- **Avoid bladder irritants**, such as foods and drinks that may bother the bladder. Some irritants are:
 - Caffeine in coffee, tea, and sodas
 - Acidic drinks such as juices
 - Alcohol
 - Artificial sweeteners
 - Spicy foods



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- **Medication** can calm bladder irritability and help reduce urine leaks.
- **Surgery** is mainly offered if return of urine control is not complete after at least a year. Your health care team will talk with you about surgical choices if other treatments haven't helped with your urinary problems.
- **Products** such as pads can help you feel dry when urine leaks.

Talk with your health care team about the pros and cons of each treatment choice and help you decide what's best for you.

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.

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.

