

Urinary Incontinence

The Myths & Facts



“There’s no cure for incontinence”

Urinary incontinence has a multitude of treatments. Ranging from medical to non-medical, preventative to protective, and invasive to non-invasive, urinary incontinence treatments can fit a variety of lifestyles and severities.

“I can’t solve my incontinence because I can’t afford expensive medicines or surgeries”

Some of the most effective treatments for urinary incontinence are completely free, they include:

- Daily physical training—specifically pelvic floor exercises—strengthen pelvic muscles that help with bladder control. You can find your pelvic floor muscle by stopping your urination mid-stream. Squeezing these muscles on a regular, daily basis can help to strengthen them.’
- Waiting 3 to 6 hours to empty one’s bladder also reteaches bladder control.
- Losing weight is also one of the single most effective steps people can take to reduce their incontinence.
- Addressing incontinence issues can even save money in some cases. Incontinence is aggravated by coffee, tea, and alcohol, since these diuretics increase urine production. Replacing these drinks with water helps both bladders and wallets.

“I can control my incontinence by limiting the amount I drink”

Contrary to this common myth, urinary incontinence is worsened by limiting fluid intake. Low fluid intake causes bladder irritation, further complicating issues. Furthermore, lowering fluid intake actually reduces the overall capacity of the bladder, worsening its ability to retain fluid.

However, the types of fluids consumed are also important. Caffeinated drinks, alcoholic drinks, and acidic fruit juices can irritate the bladder lining, undermining efforts against better urinary continence. As a general rule of thumb, water should be the primary fluid consumed throughout the day.

“Incontinence isn’t life threatening, so it’s something I should live with”

Though urinary incontinence is not life threatening, it does threaten social and working lives and has a severe adverse effect on quality of life. Individuals afflicted with incontinence often find their life dictated by their accidents, fearing embarrassment in front of friends and co-workers. Incontinence unilaterally lowers one’s quality of life, so treating it is paramount.

“Accidents caused by my incontinence are completely random, which means I can’t do anything about them”

Incontinence accidents occur based on the type of urinary incontinence one has. Identifying the type of incontinence one has is a critical first step in treating urinary incontinence.

“Incontinence is something I should feel embarrassed about”

Urinary incontinence affects one out of every two people at some stage in their life, making it one of the most widespread health issues in the world. Arbitrary social stigmas have no place in dictating one’s quality of life. Try opening up to trusted friends and family about the issue and seek help.

“Incontinence only results from ageing”

There are several causes of incontinence and while ageing may cause bladder muscles to weaken overtime, one of the major causes of urinary incontinence is obesity. Obesity causes weaker pelvic muscles and pressure on the bladder from extra weight, laying the perfect foundation for urinary incontinence to occur. In addition to this, Type II diabetes—a common result of obesity—can cause nerve damage throughout the body. This includes nerves that control the bladder.

By similar means, pregnancy can also cause urinary incontinence. Urinary incontinence can also be caused temporarily by consuming diuretics, constipation, or urinary tract infections, or more persistently by menopause, obstruction, prostate cancer, or neurological disorders. However, no matter the cause of urinary incontinence, a treatment plan can be pursued.

“If my accidents are infrequent, I can just use a sanitary towel as a pad”

Sanitary towels or other types of towels are not designed to catch urine and at best can cause minor irritation and itchiness, and at worst cause an infection. Pads designated for urinary incontinence are designed to collect urine in a sanitary and safe manner by using specific design and polymers.

“My GP has better things to worry about than my occasional incontinence”

GPs should be made aware of all health conditions, despite embarrassment or the seeming innocuousness of a health condition. A GP could help with planning an exercise regime to build pelvic muscles and make incontinence more manageable, or possibly may even spot an initial sign of a urological cancer.

The Urology Foundation is committed to finding better treatments and hopefully a cure for incontinence and other urological conditions through dedicated urology research and professional training and education. Find out how you could help in the fight against urology disease visit our website at theurologyfoundation.org

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