

How to Manage

# Urinary Incontinence



This guide is for men who have had treatment for prostate cancer. The information here is not meant to replace medical advice. For medical advice, speak to your healthcare team.

## Urinary incontinence is when you are not able to control when and how you urinate (pee).

It is common after prostate cancer treatments like surgery or radiation.

These treatments can cause a change in your urinary system or weaken the muscles you use to hold in or release your urine.

It may last a short time or it can be a long term side effect.

Talk to your healthcare team about your urinary incontinence.

## There are 4 main types of urinary incontinence.

**Stress incontinence** is when you leak urine when you do something like cough, sneeze or laugh. It is the most common type of incontinence for men after prostate cancer treatment.

**Overflow incontinence** is when you leak small amounts of urine because your bladder does not fully empty. It causes:

- the need to pee more often
- a hard time with starting to pee
- a slow or weak stream of urine
- a feeling that the bladder is not completely empty after you urinate

**Urge incontinence** is when you feel a strong need to urinate and are not able to hold in your urine. It may cause you to have an accident and pee before you can make it to the toilet. It can happen during the day and at night.

**Mixed incontinence** is when you have more than one type of incontinence. The most common types to have together are urge incontinence and stress incontinence.

- Treatments may be different for each type of incontinence.
- You and your health care team will talk about what kind of incontinence you have
- You may need to write down how often and how much you pee.
- You may need to have tests to measure the pressure in your bladder, how much urine your bladder holds, and the flow of your urine.

Once your healthcare team knows more about your urinary incontinence they can give you ways to manage your symptoms and treat the problem.

## Things you can do

**These tips are helpful for any type of incontinence you may have. Talk to your healthcare team if you need help.**



### **Strengthen your pelvic floor muscles**

These muscles help to hold pee inside your body. Strengthening them will help you be able to hold your pee and put off going to the bathroom.

### **To strengthen your pelvic floor muscles do this exercise:**

1. Squeeze your pelvic floor muscles –squeeze the muscles like you are holding in your pee or like you are trying not to pass gas.
2. Hold the squeeze for 10 seconds.
3. Relax for 10 seconds.
4. Repeat these steps 10 times.
5. Do a set of 10 exercises 3 to 5 times a day.

If you need or want help with these exercises, ask your healthcare team for support at your next visit.



**Train your body to hold your pee** by going to the toilet every 2-3 hours while you are awake. Slowly, you can make the time between toilet trips longer going every 3-4 hours.

**Try to stay away from drinks or food** that can irritate your bladder, like:

- Caffeine (in tea, coffee, cola drinks)
- Alcohol
- Citrus fruits and juices
- Drinks with artificial sweeteners
- Tomatoes and tomato-based products
- Spicy foods

**Limit your fluids** 3-4 hours before bed so that you do not have to get up at night.

**Use pads or liners** to protect your clothes from urine loss or leaking.



**To treat stress or urge incontinence, your healthcare team may suggest medication.**

Medications work in different ways to:

- Relax the bladder muscles
- Block bladder spasms
- Prevent an overactive bladder
- Increase the muscle and size of the bladder
- Strengthen the muscles that hold in your urine
- Treat an infection

The kind of incontinence you have and how much it impacts your life may mean the use of a medical device, or surgery. Talk to your doctor about your options.

## For more information visit the sites below:

### **Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia**

Website: [www.prostate.org.au](http://www.prostate.org.au)

Search term: "Understanding urinary problems"

### **Prostate Cancer Canada**

Website: [www.prostatecancer.ca](http://www.prostatecancer.ca)

Search term: "Managing urinary difficulties"