



FAST FACTS

A message for health care providers



Urinary Incontinence in Older Adults

Urinary incontinence (UI) is the unintentional leakage of urine.

The Problem

- Urinary incontinence remains under-reported and under-diagnosed for adults age 65 and older; 55% of survey respondents who had urine leakage problems reported discussing this with their providers and only 39% reported receiving treatment (2008 Medicare Health Outcomes Survey).
- Incontinence urinary urgency, and frequency are important symptoms that may be indicative of serious diseases and may also cause a wide range of morbidities.
- Many men and women experience urologic symptoms but fail to seek medical help for them because of embarrassment or the misconception that urologic changes are normal and an inevitable part of aging.

Tips for discussing urinary incontinence

- For women, make it a part of the comprehensive screening that they already undergo for breast cancer, cervical cancer and diabetes.
- For men, make it part of a regular screening program for prostatitis, benign prostatic hyperplasia, prostate cancer and diabetes.
- 5 questions to ask your patients:
 1. Many people experience problems with urinary incontinence, the leakage of urine. In the past 6 months, have you accidentally leaked urine?
 2. How much of a problem, if any, is the urine leakage for you?
 3. How have you been dealing with your urinary incontinence?
 4. Would you like to talk more about your urine leakage problem?
 5. Would you like to discuss ways to treat it?
- Keep educational materials available and visible to encourage discussion.

Common Types and Causes of urinary incontinence

1. Stress incontinence happens when the bladder can't handle the increased compression during exercise, coughing, or sneezing.
2. Urge incontinence is caused by a sudden, involuntary bladder contraction.
3. Mixed incontinence is a combination of both stress and urge incontinence.
4. Overflow incontinence, in which the bladder becomes too full because it can't be fully emptied, is rarer and is the result of bladder obstruction or injury. In men, it can be the result of an enlarged prostate.
5. Other factors that can cause incontinence are decreased mobility, cognitive impairment, and medications.

Resources:

- Mayo Clinic www.mayoclinic.com/health/urinary-incontinence/DS00404/DSECTION=symptoms
- National Association for Continence www.nafc.org/bladder-bowel-health/what-is-incontinence/
- National Guidelines (US HHS) www.guideline.gov/search/search.aspx?term=urinary+incontinence
- National Institute on Aging www.nia.nih.gov/HealthInformation/Publications/urinary.htm