

Continence Management



What is urinary incontinence?

Prostate Cancer and its treatment can be a cause of urinary incontinence.

Urinary incontinence refers to the uncontrolled leakage of urine. This can range from a few drops leaking out after peeing, to not being able to control when you pee at all.

Urinary incontinence can be either acute or chronic.

- Acute incontinence is a short-term problem.
- Chronic incontinence is a longer-term problem.

These are a problem for a large number of men of all ages. They can occur for many different reasons. In all cases, urinary incontinence is often a source of discomfort and embarrassment to men who suffer from it. In all cases, measures can be taken to reduce the impact of incontinence on your life, or even get rid of it altogether.

Symptoms: Three kinds of incontinence

Urge Incontinence

You suddenly feel a desperate need to pee. You may have sudden accidents where you leak a lot of

urine. The urgent need to pee can often occur at night, disturbing your sleep.

Overflow Incontinence

Overflow incontinence is often marked by a stream that stops and starts while you pee. The stream is likely to be weak, you may need to strain to start and finish, and may not feel like you have finished at all when you have. You may feel an urgent need to pee at night.

Stress Incontinence

Stress incontinence describes the sudden leakage of urine due to a physical activity such as coughing, straining to lift something or even just shifting your position.

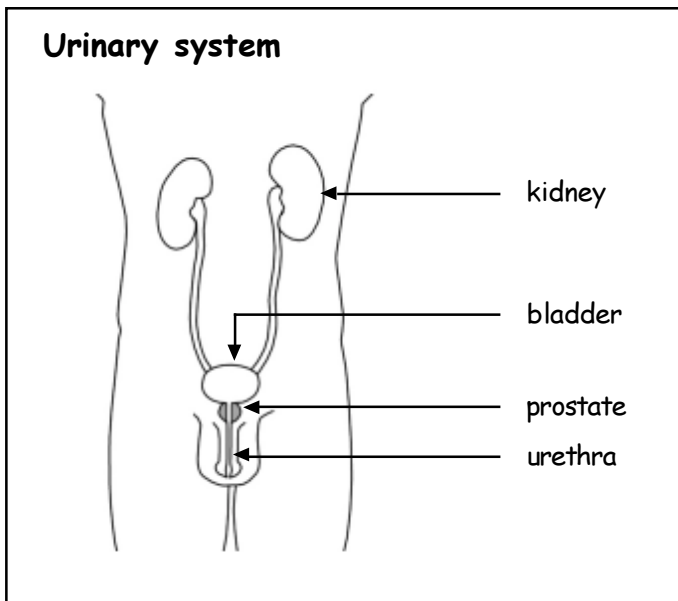
What causes incontinence?

How do I pee?

Urine is produced in the kidneys continuously. The job of the rest of the urinary system is to allow you to control when this urine is expelled from the body.

Urine produced in the kidneys collects in the bladder. Muscles at the bottom of the bladder keep the urine in until you are ready to pee. When you are ready to

pee, these muscles relax, allowing the urine to flow through the urethra and out of the body.



A further ring of muscle at the base of the prostate also helps to control urination.

Problems with the system

Most problems with incontinence occur because something has happened to the muscles that control urination.

Problems with the nervous system can also reduce control of these muscles resulting in incontinence.

The Prostate

Most urinary incontinence in men is caused by problems with the prostate.

In men, the urethra passes through the prostate just below the muscles at the base of the bladder. Prostate cancer, and treatments for prostate cancer, can affect both the muscle at the base of the bladder, and at the base of the prostate.

- A man who has had his prostate removed may have had one of the muscles removed with his prostate. This leaves only one muscle to control peeing. Up to 40% of men who have had their prostate removed will experience

acute incontinence. 3-5% will experience chronic incontinence. Surgery that removes the centre of the prostate can result in temporary acute incontinence. This can last up to 2 years. Surgery can also cause urge and stress incontinence.

- Other treatments for prostate cancer, such as radiotherapy or brachytherapy, may result in weakened muscles. Again, these often cause urge and stress incontinence.
- Prostate cancer growth or invasive treatments such as brachytherapy may cause scars to form, or swelling of the prostate gland. This can cause blockage of the urethra and overflow incontinence. BPH (enlargement of the prostate gland) may also cause a blockage by squeezing the urethra shut. Incontinence caused by a blockage is usually overflow incontinence.

What can be done about it?

There are a number of ways of dealing with urinary incontinence ranging from simple techniques to drug therapies and surgery.

Prevention – knowing in advance

If you know that you are going to have treatment that causes a risk of incontinence, or have recently been diagnosed with prostate cancer, there are a number of things you can do to reduce the severity of urinary incontinence in the future.

In fact, as all men grow older their risk of developing urinary incontinence increases, due to loss of muscle tone in the bladder, and natural growth of the prostate. Any of the following may be useful in reducing the chances of problems.

Reducing the daily risk

If you already experience incontinence, there are a number of measures you can take to reduce accidents and needing to pee at inconvenient times:

- Certain drinks such as coffee and tea, fizzy drinks and any alcohol irritate the bladder, and will increase the amount and frequency you need to pee. By cutting down on your intake of these drinks you will reduce some of the risk of accidents. Do not drastically reduce your intake of other liquids, as this can result in infections and dehydration. You need to drink at least 2 litres of liquid every day.
- Some prescription medicines increase the production of urine or relax the bladder.
 - Diuretics (water tablets).
 - Anticholinergics (anti-spasmodics).
 - Antidepressants (prescribed for bladder instability).
 - Alpha-blockers (prescribed to make the prostate contract).
 - Sedatives and narcotics.
 - Anti androgens (prescribed to shrink the prostate).
 - Alpha-adrenoceptor blockers (prescribed as a treatment for BPH).

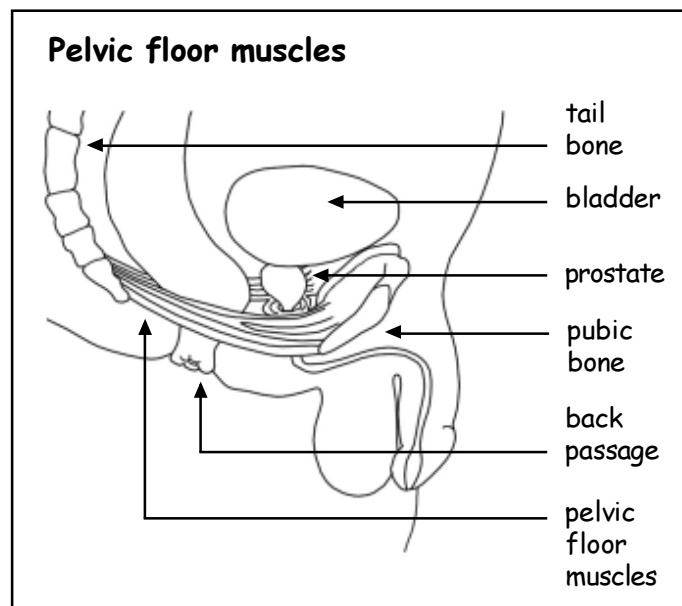
If you are prescribed any of these, you should consult your doctor about your incontinence. Some diet and cold medicines that are available over the counter can also contribute to incontinence. You should discuss this with your chemist if you are buying such medication.

Improving your continence with pelvic floor exercises

Pelvic floor exercises can help many men regain control of their bladders. The exercises work by strengthening the muscles that control peeing. This can mean re-strengthening weakened muscles or training surviving muscles to deal with what was once dealt with by two muscles.

Pelvic floor exercises are also called Kegal exercises, after their inventor.

Pelvic floor exercises can be done by healthy men to help prevent future incontinence, or by men who have undergone surgery on the prostate. **You should consult your doctor before starting pelvic floor exercises.**



Finding the correct muscles

Sit or lie down. Relax your thighs, buttocks and stomach. Tense your muscles as if you are trying to stop peeing or farting. You should feel a lifting sensation inside and a tightening of the muscles around your anus. You should not be tensing your thighs, buttocks or stomach. You can also learn what tensing the correct muscles feels like by stopping and starting your stream whilst peeing. Don't do this regularly though. Only do it to find the muscles.

The exercises

Once you have found the correct muscles, and know what it feels like when you tense them, you should do the following exercises.

1. Tense the muscles so you feel a lifting sensation. Hold this lift for as long as you can up to 10 seconds. Don't hold your breath

whilst doing this. Relax. You should have a definite feeling of letting go.

2. Wait 10-20 seconds then repeat the 'lift'. You should aim to lift then relax 12 times.
3. Do 5-10 short fast lifts.

You should try to spend 5-10 minutes each day on this exercise routine.

As you get better at the exercises, you should try to increase the time you hold the contractions. Try to see how many you can do before your muscles start to feel tired. Also, increase the number of short, fast lifts you do.

Regular training of these muscles for 4-6 months will improve the control you have over peeing.

If you suffer from stress incontinence, remember to contract the muscles before you sneeze, cough or try to lift anything.

Dealing with the problem

The above exercises and treatments for incontinence may take some time to take effect. Anyone who experiences incontinence needs to know how to take action to deal with the problems they experience in the meantime. Some men may also find that their incontinence is not treatable. They too need to know how to deal with leaks and spills.

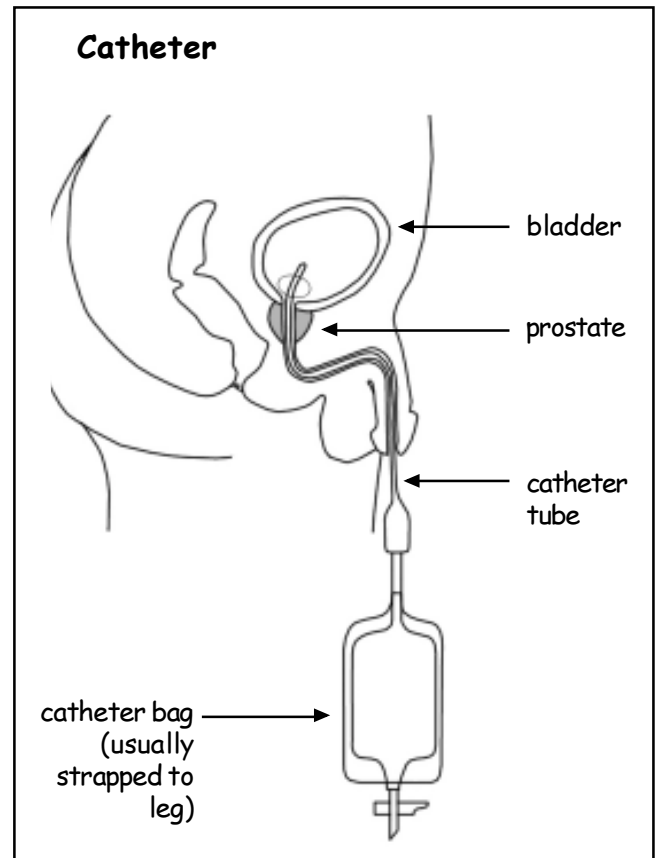
Advice

Don't suffer in silence. There are a number of places you can turn to for help and advice. Your GP will be able to offer advice and put you in touch with a continence advisor to whom you can refer yourself. Companies that make products for continence management often have helplines or advisors, and you may find that your urology department and chemists can give you this information.

Products

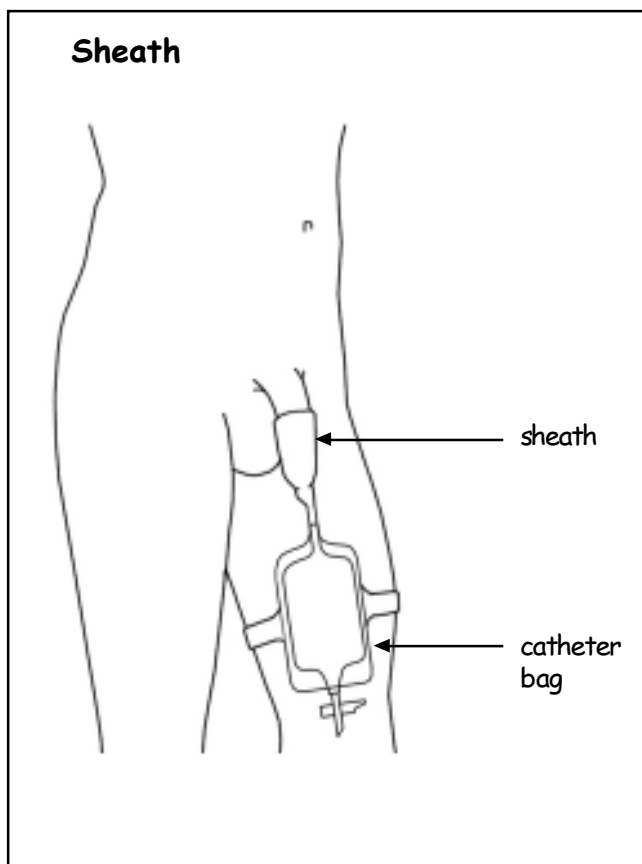
Absorbent Pads are available which soak up any leaks. These can be worn inside your underwear, or may replace your underwear altogether.

Catheters are tubes inserted down the urethra and into the bladder that allow urine to drain out of the body into a bag. The bag can be emptied when convenient.



Sheaths are similar to catheters in that they collect urine into a bag. Sheaths look like condoms with a tube coming out of the end connected to a bag. The sheath is worn over the penis, and any leaks go into the bag.

The bags that form part of sheath or catheter systems are usually worn strapped to the thigh under clothing. It is also possible to buy long underwear with a built in pocket to hold the bag.



Some products are designed to be used by both men and women, others are specifically designed for men. Some products may be better suited to men who are very active. You may have to experiment to find out exactly which products work best for you.

Some brand names you might see:

- Depends Guards for Men
- TransAqua for Men
- Sierra Labs ManHood Absorbent Pouch
- Netti Gentleman

The web site www.epinions.com has a number of pages where different products are reviewed, and you can add your own review. This is a US based site and not all products are necessarily available in the UK.

Suppliers

The products above are available from some chemists. You can also order many by mail order or over the Internet. They can also be obtained through the NHS. You should consult your doctor about this. A search on www.google.com for "Incontinence UK suppliers" will bring up a list of suppliers of continence products in the UK, or look in your phone directory.

Continence Services

A number of continence services are available. These will make sure you have an adequate supply of pads, and will dispose of soiled ones for you. These services are directly available through the companies that provide continence management products.

It is very important that you let the company you are dealing with know the number of pads you are using, or if you run out. This is to ensure that they supply you with enough pads. If you dispose of any pads yourself, be sure to tell the continence service so they know how many you will need to be supplied. You are entitled to as many pads as you need, free of charge if you are registered as having chronic incontinence, cancer or are over 65 years old.

Treatment

There are a number of treatments that can reduce the problem of incontinence. These involve surgery, drugs or both.

Surgical Treatments

Surgical treatments are often a last resort for treating chronic incontinence because of the inherent risks of any surgery, and because further disruption to the urinary system can cause other problems. Success rates for the different surgeries vary.

The following surgery is possible:

- **Artificial urinary sphincter implant** – an implant that physically constricts the urethra in order to prevent the flow of urine. An inflatable band is placed around the urethra. This is inflated by a balloon that is inserted behind the pelvic bone. A switch located in the scrotum controls the inflation. When you need to pee, the band is deflated. When you have finished the band is inflated, shutting off the urethra and preventing leaks.
- **Bulbourethral sling surgery** – A sling made of synthetic material or your own tissue is placed around the urethra. This gives extra strength to the urethra allowing it to be closed off more easily. This is a relatively new treatment that is not widely available.

If overflow incontinence is caused by a blockage, surgery can be undertaken to remove the blockage.

Drug Treatments

The following drug treatments are available:

Bulking agents can be injected into the wall of the urethra. These make the urethra walls thicker. This means that it is easier for your muscles to close the urethra off and prevent leakage.

Other sources of help and information

- **The Continence Foundation** offer support and advice through publications, their web site and a confidential helpline.

Helpline: 020 7831 9831

Web Site: www.continence-foundation.org.uk

Email: continence-help@dial.pipex.com

Write to: The Helpline Nurse at the Continence Foundation,
307 Hatton Square,
16 Baldwins Gardens,
London EC1N 7RJ

- **InContact** offers support and advice, and represents the interests of people with continence problems.

Web Site: www.incontact.org

Email: info@incontact.org

Write to: InContact, United House
North Road, London N7 9DP

Notes

The Prostate Cancer Charity makes every effort to ensure that its services reflect up-to-date, objective and accurate facts about prostate cancer. It is our hope that these will complement your medical advice and help you to make any decisions you may face. Please do continue to consult your doctor if concerned about any medical issues.

January 2003