



Do you have a bladder control problem?
Try this self-assessment questionnaire.

SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Do you:

- leak or wet yourself when you cough, laugh or sneeze?
- leak or wet yourself when you lift something heavy?
- leak or wet yourself when you play sport?
- sometimes wear pads to absorb urine, or 'just in case'?
- often have to rush to use the toilet?
- sometimes not make it to the toilet in time?
- ever worry you might lose control of your bladder?
- wake up more than once during the night to use the toilet?
- plan your day around the nearest toilet?
- sometimes feel your bladder is not quite empty?
- leak or wet yourself when you stand up?
- leak or wet yourself as you get out of bed?
- dribble urine after going to the toilet?
- have a urine stream that stops and starts?
- wet the bed?

If you said YES to any of these questions, you may have a bladder control problem.

WHAT IS POOR BLADDER CONTROL?

People with poor bladder control may:

- have accidents and leak urine. This is called urinary incontinence
- need to hurry to get to the toilet to pass urine
- wet themselves before they can get to the toilet
- go to the toilet often through the day
- be woken up more than once a night by the need to empty their bladder
- leak urine when they get up from a bed or chair
- leak urine when they lift, laugh, cough or sneeze
- wet themselves and be unaware of it
- have a stream that stops and starts instead of a smooth flow
- wet the bed.

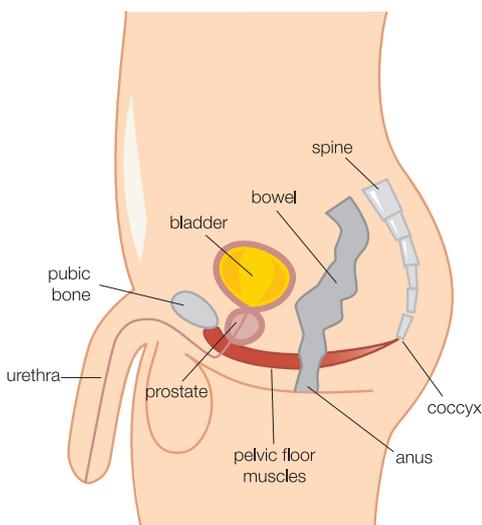
HOW COMMON IS POOR BLADDER CONTROL?

In Australia one in three women, one in ten men and one in five children have a bladder control problem.

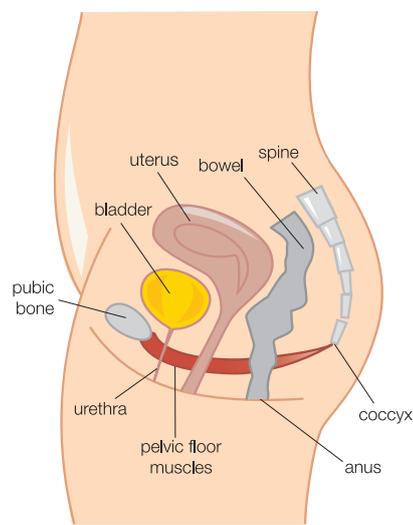
If you have a bladder control problem, you are not alone.

Men and women of all ages can have poor bladder control. Women and older people are the most likely to be affected.

DIAGRAM OF THE BLADDER CONTROL SYSTEM



© Continence Foundation of Australia 2013



© Continence Foundation of Australia 2011

WHAT CAUSES POOR BLADDER CONTROL?

Stress incontinence

Pelvic floor muscles (see diagram) help to hold urine in the bladder. Urine may leak out when you laugh, cough or sneeze if your pelvic floor muscles are weak. Pelvic floor muscles can be weakened by pregnancy and childbirth. You can also leak when you are active. Urine might leak when you exercise, get out of bed or stand up. If these muscles are weak already, getting older or being overweight can make them even weaker. Constipation can mean you need to strain to empty your bowels. This straining can also weaken your pelvic floor muscles.

Overactive bladder and urgency

The bladder is a muscle which may contract to push out urine when we do not want it to. Urgency is when the feeling to go to the toilet is sudden and strong and it is hard to hold on. It can be caused by having an overactive bladder. Urgency is also caused when the bladder is irritated. It can be made worse by drinking caffeine or alcohol. Not drinking enough fluid can lead to having strong, dark urine. This may also make urgency worse. Bladder infections can cause urgency. Having a stroke or a nerve problem such as Parkinson's disease or multiple sclerosis can also cause urgency.

Underactive bladder

Some people have a bladder muscle that does not contract well. The bladder may not empty out fully. These people have trouble passing urine normally.

Changes to the urethra (urine tube)

Any pressure on the urethra can cause it to narrow. This makes it difficult to get urine out of the bladder. This can happen in men due to an enlarged prostate. A prolapse of the uterus can affect how the bladder empties in women.

SEEK HELP

You are not alone. Poor bladder and bowel control can be cured or better managed with the right treatment. If you do nothing, it might get worse.

Phone expert advisors on the National Continence Helpline for free:

- advice
- resources
- information about local services.

1800 33 00 66* (8am–8pm Monday to Friday AEST)

To arrange for an interpreter through the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National), phone 13 14 50 Monday to Friday and ask for the National Continence Helpline. Information in other languages is also available from continence.org.au/other-languages

For more information: continence.org.au, pelvicfloorfirst.org.au, bladderbowel.gov.au

* Calls from mobiles are charged at applicable rates.

