

Incontinence – Common, Embarrassing AND Treatable

People do not generally want to talk about incontinence. Women may joke a bit with each other but for most, incontinence is no laughing matter. As a matter of fact “laughing” can even be a trigger for leaking. Incontinence is a common medical problem, with studies estimating up to 1/3 of women will experience urinary incontinence – it's more common than diabetes and heart disease.



What causes incontinence?

Incontinence can be caused by many different factors. Pelvic floor muscle weakness as a result of pregnancy or delivery, multiple deliveries, chronic straining, aging, menopause and family history are the biggest risk factors for urinary incontinence. During and after menopause, estrogen levels drop and urethral tissue tends to weaken, increasing the risk of incontinence.

There are different types of incontinence.

Urge incontinence is leakage from a sudden strong urge to go, also called "overactive bladder." The leakage may occur when you don't expect it, such as during sleep or when you see or hear running water. Urge incontinence is more common in the later years; age is the biggest risk factor.

Stress incontinence is most common in younger women. Leakage occurs with coughing, sneezing, exercising, laughing, lifting heavy things and other movements that increase pressure on the bladder and pelvic floor.

Many women have both types of incontinence – stress and urge. This is *mixed incontinence*.

Whatever the cause, incontinence is often embarrassing and hard to talk about.

But remember, incontinence is a common medical problem which millions of other women experience. Urogynecologists deal with these issues every day and do their best to help patients feel comfortable.

Treatments are available to improve your symptoms and your quality of life.

Recommended treatment will depend on the underlying cause of your incontinence. In many cases there are both non-surgical and surgical treatment possibilities. Non-surgical recommendations can include medication, physical therapy, life style changes or the use of pelvic support devices like pessaries. Minimally invasive surgical techniques may be recommended. Procedures are often performed as same-day surgery and have high success rates.

Incontinence or any pelvic floor disorder does not have to stop you from enjoying normal daily life. Getting the right diagnosis and treatment can be a life changer. If you or someone you know is experiencing incontinence or concerns about a pelvic floor issue, see a urogynecologist.

Urogynecologists see women on a daily basis who struggle with incontinence and other pelvic floor conditions. Remember the [Park Nicollet Urogynecology](#) department is available.