

Stress Incontinence in Women: Care Instructions

Your Care Instructions

Stress incontinence is the accidental release of urine caused by activities that put pressure on your bladder. It may happen most often when you sneeze, cough, laugh, jog, or lift something heavy. This condition does not cause major health problems, but it can be embarrassing and interfere with your life.

Treatment can cure or improve your symptoms.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

How can you care for yourself at home?

- Take your medicines exactly as prescribed. Call your doctor if you think you are having a problem with your medicine.
- Limit caffeine and alcohol. They make you urinate more.
- Do pelvic floor (Kegel) exercises, which tighten and strengthen pelvic muscles. To do Kegel exercises:
 - Squeeze the same muscles you would use to stop your urine. Your belly and thighs should not move.
 - Hold the squeeze for 3 seconds, and then relax for 3 seconds.
 - Start with 3 seconds. Then add 1 second each week until you are able to squeeze for 10 seconds.
 - Repeat the exercise 10 to 15 times a session. Do three or more sessions a day.
- Try wearing pads that absorb leaks. Or you may want to try to prevent leaks with a product like Poise Impressa, which you insert like a tampon.
- Keep skin in the genital area dry. Petroleum jelly (like Vaseline) spread on the area may help protect your skin.

When should you call for help?

Call your doctor now or seek immediate medical care if:

- You have new urinary symptoms. These may include leaking urine, having pain when urinating, or feeling like you need to urinate often.

Watch closely for changes in your health, and be sure to contact your doctor if:

- You do not get better as expected.

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