

Menopause and Bladder Control



B L A D D E R

*Let's talk about bladder control for women.
There's treatment that works.*

C O N T R O L

Let's Talk about Bladder Control for Women is a public health awareness campaign conducted by the National Kidney and Urologic Diseases Information Clearinghouse (NKUDIC), an information dissemination service of the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK), National Institutes of Health.

1-800-891-5388

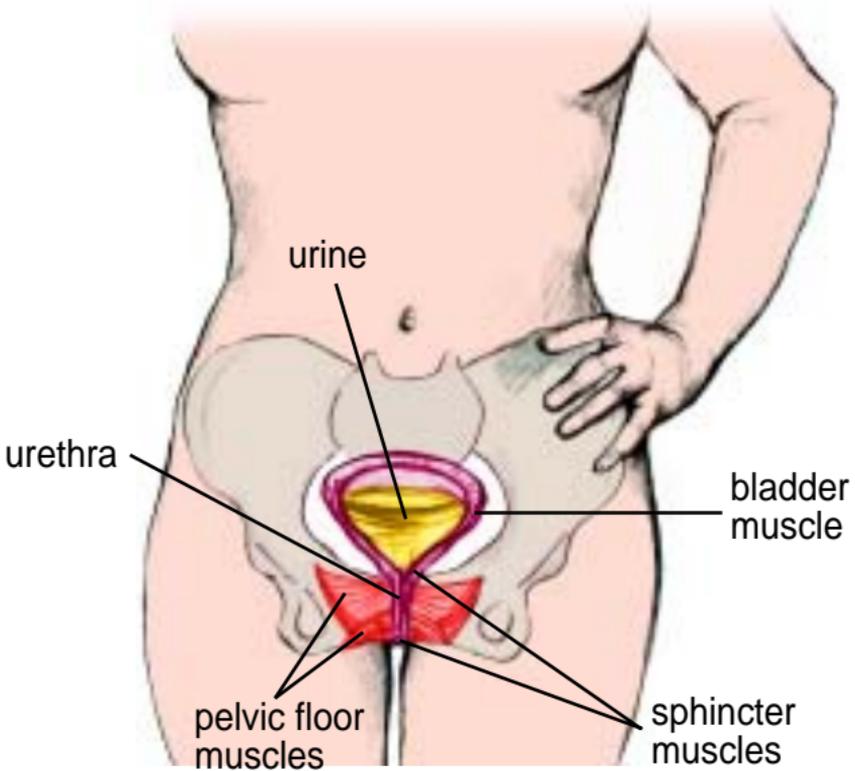
Does menopause affect bladder control?

Yes. Some women have bladder control problems after they stop having periods (menopause or change of life). If you are going through menopause, talk to your health care team.

After your periods end, your body stops making the female hormone estrogen (ES-truh-jun). Estrogen controls how your body matures, your monthly periods, and body changes during pregnancy and breast-feeding.

Some scientists believe estrogen may help keep the lining of the bladder and urethra (yoo-REE-thrah) plump and healthy. They think that lack of estrogen could contribute to weakness of the bladder control muscles.

Pressure from coughing, sneezing, or lifting can push urine through the weakened muscle. This kind of leakage is called *stress incontinence*. It is one of the most common kinds of bladder control problems in older women.



Parts of the bladder control system

Recent studies have raised doubts about the benefits of taking estrogen after menopause. The studies also point to added risks from taking estrogen for many years. No studies have shown that taking estrogen improves bladder control in women who have gone through menopause. Your doctor can suggest many other possible treatments to improve bladder control.



Good bladder control allows women to lead a fully active life.

What else causes bladder control problems in older women?

Sometimes bladder control problems are caused by other medical conditions.

These problems include

- infections
- nerve damage from diabetes or stroke
- heart problems
- medicines
- feeling depressed
- difficulty walking or moving

A very common kind of bladder control problem for older women is *urge incontinence*. This means the bladder muscles squeeze at the wrong time—or all the time—and cause leaks.

If you have this problem, your health care team can help you retrain yourself to go to the toilet on a schedule.

What should you do about bladder control after menopause?

Talk to your health care team. You may have stress or urge incontinence, but other things could also be happening.

Medicines and exercises can restore bladder control in many cases. Your doctor will give you a checkup first.



Teaching your bladder a new routine can reduce urge incontinence.

What treatments can help you regain bladder control?

It depends on what kind of bladder control problem you have. Your health care team may also recommend some of the following:

- limiting caffeine
- exercising pelvic muscles
- training the bladder to hold more urine

If these simple treatments do not work, your health care team may have you try something different. These treatments might include

- biofeedback
- electrical stimulation of pelvic muscles
- a device inserted in the vagina to hold up the bladder
- a device inserted directly into the urethra to block leakage
- surgery to lift a sagging bladder into a better position

What professionals can help you with bladder control?

Professionals who can help you with bladder control include

- your primary care doctor
- a gynecologist (guy-nuh-CALL-uh-jist): a women's doctor
- a urogynecologist (YOOR-oh-guy-nuh-CALL-uh-jist): an expert in women's bladder problems
- a urologist (yoor-ALL-uh-jist): an expert in bladder problems
- a nurse or nurse practitioner
- a physical therapist

Points to Remember

- Some women have bladder control problems after they stop having periods.
- Exercising pelvic muscles can help you maintain or improve bladder control.
- Treatment depends on the type of bladder control problem(s) you have. Talk to your health care team to find the treatment that's right for you.

National Kidney and Urologic Diseases Information Clearinghouse

3 Information Way
Bethesda, MD 20892-3580
Phone: 1-800-891-5390 or (301) 654-4415
Fax: (301) 907-8906
Email: nkudic@info.niddk.nih.gov
Internet: www.urologic.niddk.nih.gov

The National Kidney and Urologic Diseases Information Clearinghouse (NKUDIC) is a service of the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK). The NIDDK is part of the National Institutes of Health under the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Established in 1987, the clearinghouse provides information about diseases of the kidneys and urologic system to people with kidney and urologic disorders and to their families, health care professionals, and the public. NKUDIC answers inquiries, develops and distributes publications, and works closely with professional and patient organizations and Government agencies to coordinate resources about kidney and urologic diseases.

Publications produced by the clearinghouse are carefully reviewed by both NIDDK scientists and outside experts.

This publication is not copyrighted. The clearinghouse encourages users of this fact sheet to duplicate and distribute as many copies as desired.

This fact sheet is also available at
www.urologic.niddk.nih.gov.



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
AND HUMAN SERVICES
Public Health Service
National Institutes of Health



NIDDK

National Institute of Diabetes and
Digestive and Kidney Diseases

NIH Publication No. 04-4186
April 2004