

# Beating urinary incontinence

Mount Alvernia Hospital's senior consultant urologist Lie Kwok Ying explains how the condition can be managed with different methods



Urinary incontinence is not a natural cause of old age. Making lifestyle changes or using absorbent products can help manage the condition. PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES

Ever experienced an involuntary leakage of urine when least expected? That could be due to urinary incontinence. Although the condition tends to be more common as you age, it can also be caused by obesity, childbirth or neurological damage.

The inconvenience and embarrassment from it can also affect someone's psychological and social well-being.

Dr Lie Kwok Ying, senior consultant urologist at Mount Alvernia Hospital, explains more about the condition and what can be done to manage it.

## Q Which groups of people are more affected by urinary incontinence?

Incontinence can occur in both men and women at any age, but it is more common among women and older people, affecting about 30 per cent of older women and 15 per cent of older men. However, incontinence is not a normal part of ageing.

In Singapore, about 15 per cent of women suffer from stress urinary incontinence<sup>1</sup>. Stress urinary incontinence is caused by the weakening of pelvic floor support, a result of pregnancy, childbirth or menopause, or when the urethra cannot function properly.

For men above 50 years old, urinary incontinence can also be caused by an enlarged prostate or prostate cancer.

Young patients may also suffer from urinary incontinence due to an overactive bladder.

## Q What are some common types of urinary incontinence?

Types of urinary incontinence include:

- **Stress incontinence:** Urine leaks happen when there is pressure on the bladder from coughing, sneezing, laughing, exercising or lifting something heavy.
- **Urge incontinence:** A sudden, intense urge to urinate followed by an involuntary loss of urine. You may need to urinate often, including throughout the night.

- **Overflow incontinence:** You experience frequent or constant dribbling of urine due to a bladder that doesn't empty completely.

- **Functional incontinence:** A physical or mental impairment keeps you from making it to the toilet in time. For example, if you have severe arthritis, you may not be able to unbutton your pants quickly enough.

- **Mixed incontinence:** When more than one type of urinary incontinence occurs. It most commonly refers to a combination of stress incontinence and urge incontinence.

## Q What are some treatment and management methods for urinary incontinence?

Urinary incontinence can be treated, sometimes cured, and always managed.

Lifestyle modifications such as weight control in obese patients and reduction of caffeine intake may help to reduce symptoms of stress, urge or mixed urinary incontinence.

There are also medications and even bladder injections which can help with urge incontinence.

Surgery can sometimes improve or cure incontinence if it is caused by a change in the position of the bladder or blockage due to an enlarged prostate.

There are absorbent products and condom catheters, toilet substitutes like wearable urinals and skin care products that can help prevent problems like Incontinence Associated Dermatitis.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.singhealth.com.sg/patient-care/conditions-treatments/stress-urinary-incontinence-female-urinary-disorders>



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