

Managing Urinary Incontinence



There are many different devices available for managing urinary incontinence, each accommodating different lifestyles. We've described some of the possible options that could help you manage your urinary incontinence. Please discuss with your GP to determine which option is best suited for you.

Pads

Pads are the most common device to manage urinary incontinence. There are four variations of pads—liners, diapers, pull-ups, and male pouches. Depending on your gender, the amount of urine leakage you experience, and if bowel incontinence is also an issue, sub-variations of the four main pads can further accommodate unique characteristics.

Catheters

Catheters are another common incontinence management device. A catheter is a narrow tube inserted down the urethra to the bladder, designed to drain urine from the bladder. There are two main types of catheter—intermittent catheters and indwelling catheters. Intermittent catheters are inserted temporarily to fully drain the bladder. Indwelling catheters, also known as Foley catheters, are inserted for extended periods to prevent uncontrolled urine leakage. Catheters empty into urine drainage bags, which can range from large capacity bags used during sleep, to inconspicuous leg bags for everyday use.

Medication

Depending on the type of urinary incontinence some medicines may be beneficial. For stress incontinence medication can help increase the muscle tone of the urethra, which should help keep it closed. Medication that relaxes the muscles in the bladder wall which helps the bladder fill up with and store urine. As with all medication these prescribed medicines could have side effects.

Gender-Specific Devices

Male

Similar in concept to condoms, sheaths control urine leakage by encapsulating the penis. Like catheters, sheaths can be connected to urine drainage bags.

Penile compression devices press the penis closed, preventing uncontrolled urine leakage. Penile compression devices are typically used for short periods; as extended use can cause discomfort.

Gender-Specific Devices

Female

Intraurethral devices are used to temporarily block off the urethra, preventing any urine from passing. Similar to the penile compression device, this device should only be used for short periods to avoid discomfort and damage to the body.

Internal vaginal devices give greater support to the bladder, reducing overall bladder leakage. These devices can range from tampons—a cheap, easy-to-find option—to reusable silicone devices. No matter the option taken, every woman should check with their GP every 6 months to monitor the possible effects that internal vaginal devices could cause in the body.

Surgery

Surgery is rarely a first-choice treatment for urinary incontinence. It is usually offered if other treatments have been unsuccessful. There are a number of surgical options depending on the type of urological incontinence, including

- Tape procedures can be used for women with stress incontinence and works by holding the urethra up in the correct position, helping to reduce the leak of urine.
- A colposuspension lifts the neck of the bladder which is then stitched in place helping to prevent involuntary leaks in women with stress incontinence.
- Botulinum toxin A (Botox) injection into the sides of bladder to treat urge incontinence and overactive bladder syndrome. This can sometimes help relieve these problems by relaxing the bladder.

The sooner you can seek help for incontinence the quicker you can get back to living life to the full.

The Urology Foundation is committed to finding better treatments and hopefully a cure for incontinence and other urological conditions through dedicated urology research and professional training and education. Find out how you could help in the fight against urology disease visit our website at theurologyfoundation.org

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