



SENIORCARE OPTIONS

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Aging Life Care Management
for the Metro Atlanta Area
Assisting medically frail seniors,
disabled adults, & their caregivers



Urinary Incontinence – The worry, urge, and appropriate solutions

Embarrassing, a cause of frustration, unsafe, a loss, a personal concern, unsanitary, and problematic – are just a few ways to describe urinary incontinence. This loss of bodily control is a very common issue affecting 25 million Americans of all ages; however is frequently seen as a concern of middle-aged and older adults. It is NOT a natural sign of aging and many things can be helpful in gaining more control with this symptom.

Having the conversation with your loved ones can be extremely difficult. It will be important to be discussed by the best person for the conversation – while being aware of the tone, timing, conflict potential, and gentleness of approach. It is a very personal topic and the loss of this basic and life-long ability can be very difficult.

It can be helpful to get an idea of how and when the bladder weakness or problem is occurring specific to the person. There are mechanisms such as a bladder diary (see example under resources) that can help to gain helpful information about the symptom before discussing with one's doctor.

It can also be important to pose questions like:

- How many times do you wake during the night with the urge to urinate? At what times of night does this occur?
- Do you leak urine? Are there any activities or occurrences that appear to increase or cause the leakage?
- How often do you feel the uncontrollable urge to use the bathroom?
- What are you eating or drinking (and at what times of the day) do you feel contributes to further issues?
- Do you find yourself not drinking the recommended amount of water or fluids because you are concerned with bladder control?
- Do you ever avoid social situations because you are scared you will have an issue?

There are generally 4 different types of urinary incontinence (or the issue may a combination of types):

- **Urge incontinence** is the most frequently seen type and is best defined as an abrupt feeling that urination is imminent – whether or not there are actually leakage issues. This type can be associated with a multitude of causes from MS, infections, fecal impactions, uterine prolapse, or benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH which is a non-cancerous enlargement of the prostate).
- **Stress incontinence** typically affects women post-pregnancy or post-menopause – which may include leakage of urine in the event of exercise, jumping, coughing, laughing, or sneezing.
- **Overflow incontinence** results when the bladder exceeds its capacity because there is a reduced signal to the brain that urination is necessary. This may be the result of medication side effects (including those for anxiety, pain, fluid retention, or depression) or underlying conditions like BPH, diabetes, or neuropathy.
- **Functional incontinence** is primarily related to one's lessened cognitive or physical abilities. This is typically the diagnosis of exclusion when all other causes have been discussed.

Many causes are easily treatable through a series of behavioral changes, medications, or treatments for the root cause of the symptom. Finding a solution that assists in managing the condition can give a sense of control, responsibility, and security. Solutions may include medications – however before accepting this solution it is important to have a full discussion regarding side effects. Bladder control medications may lead to constipation, dry mouth, racing heart beat, and changes in cognitive abilities.

The doctor may also recommend pelvic floor strengthening exercises (such as kegel exercises) to assist in the ability to prevent leakage. There are things that can also be done to promote the full emptying of the bladder (such as sitting properly on the toilet seat, leaning forward and rocking, or even whistling while urinating to force muscles to contract). One may need to reduce the consumption of substances like alcohol or caffeine due to the association with increased urges or even change the timing of certain medications (through discussions with doctor) to maintain increased control. One might also try using the bathroom on a every-2-hour schedule to attempt to empty the bladder with increased frequency.

If necessary, absorbent products like pads, pull-ups, linen savers for the bed/furniture, or briefs may be needed to assist in managing one's concerns. If needed, it will be important to stay sanitary, not reuse products, and keep one's skin clean, healthy, and dry. The use of products may also reduce concerns of embarrassment in public situations, save on laundry needs, reduce fall risks, and reduce isolation risks. Possibly, even using a bedside commode or urinal to make access to facilities much more available can reduce concerns.

Resources Available

Bladder Diary from the National Kidney and Urologic Diseases Information Clearinghouse - http://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/health-topics/urologic-disease/daily-bladder-diary/Documents/diary_508.pdf

Kegel Exercises for Men and Women from the Mayo Clinic –

<http://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/womens-health/in-depth/kegel-exercises/art-20045283>

<http://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/mens-health/in-depth/kegel-exercises-for-men/art-20045074>

About SeniorCare Options

SeniorCare Options provides Certified Aging Life Care Management throughout the Metro-Atlanta area. Our team consists of Master's level clinicians in the fields of counseling, social work, therapeutic recreation, and registered nursing. Our backgrounds are vast and specific to the current clinical needs of our clients and their families who may be in transition, have chronic or difficult-to-manage conditions, and who require increased guidance. Our interdisciplinary focus, extensive experience, and heightened sensitivity to their specific needs prove to be an invaluable asset to families faced with the maze of options and care needs. **For more information** regarding Aging Life Care Management services, our support groups, or to inquire about requesting services for someone under your care, **please contact us at: 770-579-9177 or info@seniorcareopt.com.**