

Women's Health – Incontinence

Types of Incontinence

As many as one in four women suffer uncontrolled loss of urine (incontinence) at some stage during their life.

The most common form of incontinence affected women is **urinary stress incontinence** (USI). USI is the leakage of urine which occurs due to a sudden increase in intra-abdominal pressure when laughing, sneezing, running or jumping.

Another common type of incontinence is **urge incontinence**. This occurs when a person is unable to get to the toilet in time due to an uncontrolled sensation to pass urine.

It is possible to suffer from more than one type of incontinence.

Causes of Incontinence

Incontinence may occur following:-

- Pregnancy and vaginal birth
- Constant coughing over a long period of time
- Not using the pelvic floor muscles because of illness or lack of awareness
- Heavy lifting, especially soon after childbirth
- Straining because of constipation
- Hysterectomy or other pelvic surgery
- The effects of certain medications
- Infections of the urinary tract
- Neurological disorders eg. Stroke

How can physiotherapy help?

Both stress and urge incontinence can be successfully treated by physiotherapists. Your physiotherapist will make a detailed assessment of your pelvic floor muscle function to determine the best treatment.

Pelvic floor muscle training and use of biofeedback devices such as Real-Time Ultrasound are common treatment approaches. Bladder re-training techniques and electrotherapy are also frequently used.

Remember incontinence is not an inevitable part of ageing and something can be done about it! Don't be afraid or embarrassed to talk to your physiotherapist about it. Your privacy will always be respected and treatment is conducted in a relaxed environment.

Other Women's Health Issues You Can Ask Your Physio About

- Pre / Post Natal exercise fitness programmes
- Mastitis
- Musculoskeletal pain associated with pregnancy, breastfeeding and baby care
- Post mastectomy