

Female Incontinence

What Is Female Incontinence?

Female incontinence refers to the involuntary leakage of urine in women. It is a common and often distressing problem that can affect women of all ages. It can occur due to a variety of reasons, including pregnancy, childbirth, menopause, and certain medical conditions.

Potential Symptoms

The symptoms of female incontinence can vary depending on the type and severity of the condition, but common symptoms include:

- **Stress incontinence:** Leakage of urine during physical activities such as coughing, sneezing, laughing, or exercising.
- **Urge incontinence:** A sudden, intense urge to urinate followed by involuntary leakage. Frequent urination, often including nocturia (waking up during the night to urinate).
- **Overflow incontinence:** Dribbling of urine due to a bladder that doesn't completely empty. Frequent, or constant dribbling of urine.
- **Functional incontinence:** Urinary leakage due to physical or mental impairments that prevent one from reaching the toilet in time.
- **Mixed incontinence:** A combination of stress and urge incontinence symptoms.

Treatment Options

The treatment for female incontinence depends on the type and severity of the condition, and it may involve one or more of the following options:

Lifestyle and behavioural changes:

- Bladder training to increase the intervals between urination.
- Pelvic floor exercises to strengthen the muscles that control urination.
- Dietary changes, such as reducing caffeine and alcohol intake.

Medication:

- Antimuscarinics (anticholinergics): to calm an overactive bladder e.g oxybutinin
- Topical oestrogen to rejuvenate and strengthen vaginal and urethral tissues.
- Beta-3 Agonists to relax the bladder muscle and increases its storage capacity e.g. mirabegron

Medical devices:

- Urethral inserts or pessaries to support the bladder.

Surgical options:

- Sling procedures to provide support to the urethra.

- Bladder neck suspension to lift the bladder neck and urethra.
- Artificial urinary sphincter insertion for severe cases.

Other interventions:

- Injections of bulking agents to help close the bladder neck.
- Nerve stimulators to regulate bladder function.

Management

Management of female incontinence typically involves several stages:

Diagnosis:

- Comprehensive medical history and physical examination.
- Urinalysis to check for infections or other abnormalities.
- Bladder diary to track urination patterns and symptoms.
- Urodynamic tests to assess bladder function.

Initial management:

- Implementation of lifestyle and behavioural modifications.
- Prescribing medications if necessary.

Follow-up and adjustment:

- Regular follow-up appointments to monitor progress.
- Adjusting treatment plans based on effectiveness and side effects

Advanced interventions:

- Considering surgical or device-based treatments if conservative methods are ineffective.

Risks Of Treatment

Medication side effects:

- Dry mouth, constipation, blurred vision, and dizziness.

Surgical risks:

- Infection, bleeding, injury to surrounding organs, and urinary retention.
- Postoperative pain and discomfort.

Device-related issues:

- Discomfort or irritation from urethral inserts or pessaries.
- Risk of erosion or infection with implanted devices.

Recovery Process

Recovery from female incontinence treatment varies based on the type of treatment:

Non-surgical treatments:

- Generally, involve minimal downtime.
- Improvement may be gradual over weeks or months.

Surgical treatments:

- May require a short hospital stay followed by several weeks of recovery.
- Patients are usually advised to avoid heavy lifting and strenuous activities during the initial recovery period.
- Pelvic floor exercises may be recommended to aid recovery.

Follow-Up Care

- Regular check-ups to ensure proper healing and assess the effectiveness of the treatment.
- Ongoing pelvic floor exercises and lifestyle adjustments to maintain bladder control.

Why Choose Birmingham Urology Centre

Female incontinence is a manageable condition with a range of treatment options available. Early diagnosis and intervention can significantly improve the quality of life for those affected. At Birmingham Urology Centre, our experienced urologists provide comprehensive evaluation and treatment for female incontinence. We use the latest diagnostic tools and techniques to ensure accurate diagnosis and effective treatment plans tailored to your needs.

Contact us today to book an appointment or for more information on female incontinence and treatment options.