Fuel 4 Women

KSC/CCAFS HEALTH EDUCATION AND WELLNESS PROGRAM

Overactive Bladder (Incontinence)
December 2005

WHAT IS OVERACTIVE BLADDER?

If you are leaking urine when you cough, laugh or sneeze, or you have sudden urges to go to the bathroom that are so intense you fear you won't get there in time, you are probably experiencing incontinence. The inability to control urination is a treatable, and often curable, problem faced by more than 13 million Americans, 85 percent of whom are women. While about half the elderly experience urinary incontinence, and it is a major cause of admission to nursing homes, it is often mistakenly thought of as a problem suffered only by older people. In fact, incontinence can occur at any age. Among women ages 15 to 64, it is estimated 10 to 30 percent have urine control troubles, and about one in four women ages 39 to 59 has had an episode of incontinence.

Although the majority of incontinence cases can be improved or cured, less than half of those afflicted ever discuss their problem with a health care professional. Instead of recognizing incontinence as a treatable condition and pursuing treatment, many women view it as an embarrassing consequence of aging, and wear protective pads and/or diaper-like products. Health care professionals recommend using absorbent products during treatment, or as a solution of last resort when other therapy fails, but not as the first and only treatment for incontinence. Left untreated, incontinence can lead to skin rashes and infections, loss of self-esteem, emotional distress and self-imposed isolation. You don't have to suffer incontinence in silence, as there are several treatment options from which you and your health care professional can choose.

CAUSES

A malfunctioning detrusor muscle (smooth muscle that surrounds the bladder) causes overactive bladder. Identifiable underlying causes include the following:

- Nerve damage caused by abdominal trauma, pelvic trauma, or surgery
- Bladder stones
- Drug side effects

RELEASED - Printed documents may be obsolete; validate prior to use.

- Neurological disease (e.g., multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's disease, stroke, spinal cord lesions)

Other conditions can produce symptoms similar to those experienced with overactive bladder, the most common of which is urinary tract infection (UTI) in women.

DIAGNOSIS

To diagnose the cause of your incontinence, your health care professional will first ask questions about your urinary habits and medical history. You should receive a thorough physical examination, including a pelvic exam, in which your health care professional will look for medical conditions that may be causing leakage, such as infections, tumors or impacted stool.

You may be asked to keep a diary of your urinary patterns for at least three days, up to a week. In the bladder diary, you record what, when and how much liquid you drink; how many times you urinate and how much; how many leaks you have; whether you felt an urgency to urinate; and what you were doing at the time you experienced a leak.

Your health care professional may also perform some tests, depending on the type and suspected causes of your incontinence, including:

- Urinalysis
- Cough Stress Test
- Post-Void Residual Measurement Test
- Blood Tests

SYMPTOMS

Three symptoms are associated with an overactive bladder:

- Frequency (frequent urination)
- Urgency (urgent need to urinate)
- Urge incontinence (strong need to urinate followed by leaking or involuntary and complete voiding)

TREATMENT

Incontinence is not a disease, though it can be a symptom of an underlying condition, such as diabetes. However, most incontinence in women is triggered

RELEASED - Printed documents may be obsolete; validate prior to use.

by problems with the bladder and sphincter muscles, which can weaken with age and from childbirth.

Treatment options include:

- behavioral techniques
- pelvic muscle exercises
- medications
- medical devices that block or capture urine
- surgery to repair or lift the urethra or bladder neck to provide support

QUICK FACTS

- More than 13 million Americans, 11 million of them women, suffer from incontinence.
- More than half of women with incontinence never discuss it with their health care professional. In most cases, treatment can improve or cure incontinence, once the condition is brought to the attention to a health care professional.
- One in four women between the ages of 39 and 59 has experienced incontinence.

URINARY INCONTINENCE PREVENTION

Although there is no scientifically proven regimen to prevent urinary incontinence, maintaining your general health is always a good step to head off illnesses and disease that might cause incontinence. Healthy eating and weight control may be preventive measures, as there have been links between obesity and incontinence. Activities that exert pressure on pelvic muscles should be avoided, such as straining during bowel movements, or heavy lifting. Persistent coughing from smoking also can stress pelvic muscles, giving smokers another reason to quit.

Steps toward prevention may also include drinking six to eight, eight-ounce glasses of fluid a day to keep your body hydrated, but not waiting too long to urinate as this can stretch the bladder and weaken its muscles. Emptying your bladder four to eight times in 24 hours is normal, as is urinating about every three to four hours during the day, as well as getting up once at night to go to the bathroom.

Performing pelvic muscle, or Kegel, exercises, especially after pregnancy and taking estrogen or hormonal replacement therapy after menopause may play a

RELEASED - Printed documents may be obsolete; validate prior to use.

role in possibly preventing incontinence. Your health care professional can advise whether such therapies will benefit you.

Reducing caffeine and alcohol consumption can improve the body's ability to retain urine. Both substances can inhibit production of a hormone that concentrates and decreases the volume of urine by increasing reabsorption of fluid by the kidneys.

Although there is no specific diet to prevent incontinence, it is thought certain foods and drinks can irritate the bladder, and should be avoided if consuming them appears to produce or increase symptoms:

- carbonated beverages
- coffee or tea, including decaffeinated forms
- milk or milk products
- citrus juice and fruits
- tomatoes, and tomato-based products
- sugar
- honey
- corn syrup
- artificial sweeteners
- chocolate
- spicy foods

Some medications may contribute to incontinence. Talk with your health care professional if you experience urinary leakage while taking these drugs:

- diuretics, or "water pills," that increase urine flow, including: Esidrix, Lasix, Maxide
- sedatives and muscle relaxants, including: Valium, Librium, Ativan
- antihistamines, and cold and allergy medications, such as Benadryl
- antidepressants and antipsychotics, including: Elavil, Prolixin, Haldol
- calcium channel blockers, which are often prescribed for high blood pressure and angina, including Calan, Procardia, Cardizem

KSC/CCAFS HEALTH EDUCATION AND WELLNESS PROGRAM

Fuel 4 Women

Jessica Crews
Jessica.Crews@jbosc.ksc.nasa.gov
(321) 867-4566

- *Educating woman about their health*
- *Encouraging woman to act against disease*

RELEASED - Printed documents may be obsolete; validate prior to use.

RESOURCES

National Women's Health Resource Center.
http://www.healthywomen.org

Urology Channel
http://www.urologychannel.com

REFERENCES

Overactive Bladder: Diagnosis. National Women's Health Resource Center. Retrieved on 23 Nov 2005 from http://www.healthywomen.org/content.cfm?L1=3&L2=127&L3=1.0000

Overactive Bladder: Facts to Know. National Women's Health Resource Center. Retrieved on 18 Nov 2005 from http://www.healthywomen.org/content.cfm?L1=3&L2=127&L3=4.0000

Overactive Bladder: Overview. National Women's Health Resource Center. Retrieved on 18 Nov 2005 from http://www.healthywomen.org/content.cfm?L1=3&L2=127

Overactive Bladder: Prevention. National Women's Health Resource Center. Retrieved on 18 Nov 2005 from http://www.healthywomen.org/content.cfm?L1=3&L2=127&L3=3.0000

Overactive Bladder: Treatment. National Women's Health Resource Center. Retrieved on 23 Nov 2005 from http://www.healthywomen.org/content.cfm?L1=3&L2=127&L3=2.0000

Overactive Bladder. Urology Channel. Retrieved on 04 Nov 2005 from http://www.urologychannel.com/bladdercontrol/index.shtml

RELEASED - Printed documents may be obsolete; validate prior to use.

RELEASED - Printed documents may be obsolete; validate prior to use.