

Living With Incontinence – Treating Incontinence

There are several steps to taking control of incontinence and minimising its effect on your lifestyle.

The first step should be to visit a doctor to identify the type of incontinence you're experiencing. By completing a urine bladder diary for seven days before the doctor's visit, the doctor or nurse can make an accurate assessment and diagnosis.

A doctor may also ask for personal and family medical history, a list of any prescription and over-the-counter medications being taken, or a history of accidents and injuries. The doctor may also recommend testing to make an accurate assessment of your condition.

After reviewing this information and completing other diagnostic tests, a recommendation on the best treatment can be made.

Some of the treatments that might be recommended include:

- **Pelvic Floor Exercises:** Pelvic muscle exercises help women strengthen the muscles of the pelvic floor during pregnancy and after childbirth. In some instances, these exercises have also been effective in reducing incontinence even in men.
- **Bladder Training Program:** This involves training yourself to hold on for longer between visits to the toilet and to make sure you empty your bladder properly when you go. There are a number of tricks to doing this and these are best learned under the supervision of a physiotherapist or continence advisor. If a doctor suggests bladder training, a bladder diary as well as a schedule of normal everyday activities, will be important in developing a successful program.
- **Biofeedback:** In addition to pelvic muscle exercises, biofeedback may be recommended to help identify and control the muscles located around the bladder opening. In a clinic or similar setting, small sensors are temporarily placed in contact with your body. As you practice contracting muscles around the bladder opening, the sensors give you a signal, usually an audible tone or movement on a visual display or graph, indicating when you have correctly contracted the right muscles. In this manner, biofeedback can help maximise the benefits gained from practicing pelvic muscle exercises.
- **Medication:** In some cases, medication may be prescribed either alone, or in combination with behavioural treatment to help restore continence. Be aware that some medications may actually contribute to incontinence. For this reason, be sure the doctor knows about all other prescription and over-the-counter drugs being taken. All medications should be taken under the care of a doctor.
- **Surgery:** Surgery may be suggested as a means of treating a physical condition contributing to incontinence.