Urinary Incontinence: A Common and Treatable Problem

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Whether you're going out socially or enjoying recreational activities with family and friends, urinary incontinence can be an embarrassing and inconvenient problem.

But people with this disorder shouldn't allow their embarrassment to keep them from seeking help. Urinary incontinence is actually very common and may be easily treatable. In fact, the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases report that 80 percent of incontinence cases can be greatly improved.

Who develops urinary incontinence?
Due to pregnancy, childbirth, menopause and the structure of women's urinary tracts, women experience incontinence twice as often as men. Although older women most commonly suffer from this disorder, it may also appear in women as young as 30.

What causes urinary incontinence?
Urinary incontinence can be a temporary condition caused by an underlying medical condition, or it can be triggered by specific changes in body function due to diseases, weakened muscles in the pelvic region or use of medications. Whatever the cause, urinary incontinence ranges from the discomfort of slight losses of urine to severe, frequent wetting.

What are some of the different types of urinary incontinence?

- Urge incontinence: An overactive or "spastic" bladder can cause you to lose urine for no apparent reason while feeling the sudden urge to urinate. This type of incontinence is often found in those with conditions such as diabetes, stroke, dementia, Parkinson's disease and multiple sclerosis but may be an indication of other diseases or conditions that would also warrant medical attention.
- Stress incontinence: The most common type of incontinence, it involves the leakage of urine during exercise, coughing, sneezing, laughing, lifting heavy objects or other body movements that put pressure on the bladder.
- Functional incontinence: People with this type of incontinence have trouble reaching a restroom in time because of difficulty moving, thinking or communicating.
- Overflow incontinence: Leakage occurs when the quantity of urine produced exceeds the bladder's capacity to hold it.

How is urinary incontinence diagnosed?
Those who are having difficulty controlling their urine should consult a doctor who specializes in
the urinary tract, such as an urologist or an urogynecologist, who specializes in urological issues in women.

No matter the doctor, he or she should ask questions about your symptoms and medical history in order to diagnose the problem. Doctors will also perform a complete physical examination of the urinary and nervous systems, reproductive organs and take urine samples.

**What types of treatments are available?**
A specialist can help you determine the best treatment route based on a number of factors, including your overall health, your expectations and the cause of your incontinence. Surgery, medications and electrical stimulation to strengthen the muscles in the lower pelvis are some treatment options.

More natural solutions may include diet modifications, such as cutting down on caffeine and eliminating alcohol, or Kegel exercises, which strengthen or retrain pelvic muscles. In addition, specifically designed absorbent underclothing is available to help manage incontinence. Today's adult incontinence products are no more bulky than normal underwear and can be worn easily under everyday clothing.

If you are experiencing urinary incontinence, please consult your physician with your questions regarding the management and treatment of urinary incontinence. No one should feel embarrassed by the condition, and it's important to remember that many successful treatments exist.

For appointments, referrals or more information, please contact MCG Urogynecology Associates at (706) 860-4004 or (706) 721-4959.