

A man and a woman are jogging in a park. The man is wearing a light blue t-shirt and grey pants, and the woman is wearing a yellow tank top and purple pants with a red jacket tied around her waist. They are both smiling and looking towards the camera. The background is a blurred forest with autumn-colored trees.

BLADDER CONTROL PROBLEM?

One in four Australians aged 15 years and over have a bladder control problem

Ask yourself

Do I:

- ☐ leak or wet myself when I cough, laugh or sneeze?
- ☐ leak or wet myself when I lift something heavy?
- ☐ leak or wet myself when I play sport?
- ☐ sometimes wear pads to absorb urine (wee), or 'just in case'?
- ☐ often have to rush to use the toilet?
- ☐ sometimes not make it to the toilet in time?
- ☐ ever worry I might lose control of my bladder?
- ☐ wake up more than once during the night to use the toilet?
- ☐ plan my day around the nearest toilet?
- ☐ sometimes feel my bladder is not quite empty?
- ☐ leak or wet myself when I stand up?
- ☐ leak or wet myself as I get out of bed?
- ☐ dribble urine after going to the toilet?
- ☐ have a urine stream that stops and starts?
- ☐ wet the bed?

If you said YES to any of these questions, you may have a bladder control problem.

What is poor bladder control?

People with poor bladder control may:

- ⇒ have accidents and leak urine. This is called urinary incontinence
- ⇒ need to hurry to get to the toilet to pass urine
- ⇒ wet themselves before they can get to the toilet
- ⇒ go to the toilet often through the day
- ⇒ be woken up more than once a night by the need to empty their bladder
- ⇒ leak urine when they get up from a bed or chair
- ⇒ leak urine when they lift, laugh, cough or sneeze
- ⇒ wet themselves and be unaware of it
- ⇒ have a stream that stops and starts instead of a smooth flow
- ⇒ wet the bed.

How common is poor bladder control?

One in four Australians aged 15 years and over have a bladder control problem.

If you have a bladder control problem, you are not alone.

Men and women of all ages can have poor bladder control. Women and older people are the most likely to be affected.

You don't have to put up with it

What causes poor bladder control?

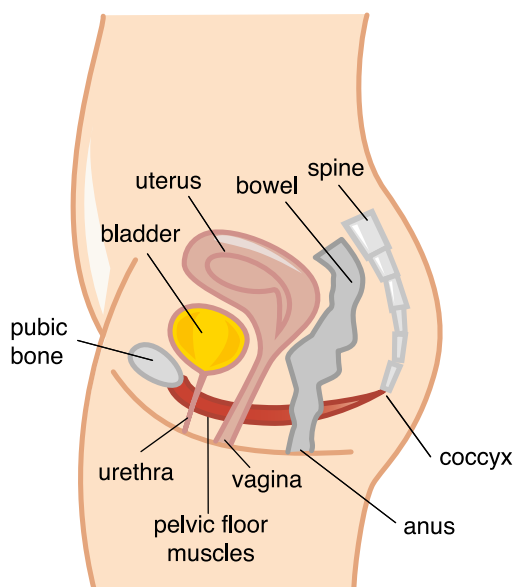
Stress incontinence

Pelvic floor muscles (see diagrams) help to hold urine in the bladder. Urine may leak out when you laugh, cough or sneeze if your pelvic floor muscles are weak.

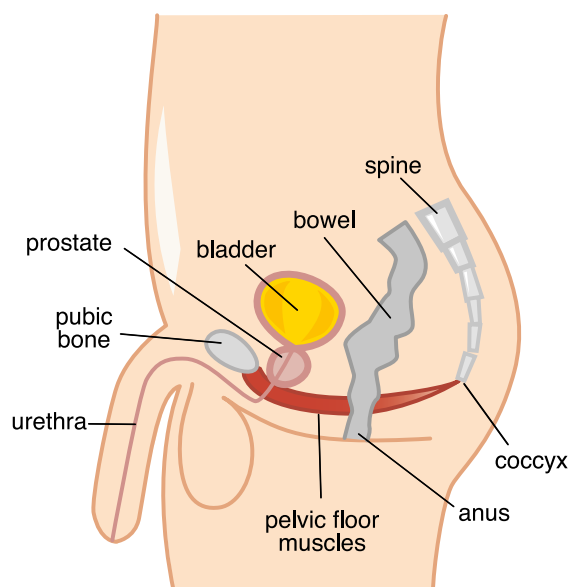
Pelvic floor muscles can be weakened by:

- pregnancy and childbirth
- constipation
- chronic cough
- being overweight
- nerve damage to the lower back
- prostate surgery
- pelvic surgery.

You can also leak when you are active. Urine might leak when you exercise, get out of bed or stand up. If these muscles are weak already, getting older or being overweight can make them even weaker. Constipation can mean you need to strain to empty your bowels. This straining can also weaken your pelvic floor muscles.



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Overactive bladder and urgency

The bladder is a muscle which may contract to push out urine when we do not want it to.

Urgency is when the feeling to go to the toilet is sudden and strong and it is hard to hold on. It can be caused by having an overactive bladder.

Urgency is also caused when the bladder is irritated. It can be made worse by drinking caffeine or alcohol. Not drinking enough fluid can lead to having strong, dark urine. This may also make urgency worse.

Bladder infections and constipation can cause urgency. Having a stroke or a nerve problem such as Parkinson's disease or multiple sclerosis can also cause urgency.

Underactive bladder

Some people have a bladder muscle that does not contract well. The bladder may not empty out fully. These people have trouble passing urine normally.

Causes of underactive bladder:

- Over-stretching the bladder
- nerve damage.

Changes to the urethra (urine tube)

Any pressure on the urethra can cause it to narrow. This makes it difficult to get urine out of the bladder. This can happen in men due to an enlarged prostate. A prolapse of the uterus can affect how the bladder empties in women.

Constipation can also be a cause.

Call the National Continence Helpline on 1800 33 00 66 (free call)

Speak with a nurse continence specialist for free and confidential advice on resources, details for local continence services, products and financial assistance.

For more information, you can also visit:

continence.org.au

toiletmap.gov.au

health.gov.au/bladder-bowel

This fact sheet is intended as a general overview only and is not a substitute for professional assessment and care.

This fact sheet is available in other languages from continence.org.au



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