

Your Journey with Female Urinary Incontinence



For more information scan this QR code or go to myhealth.alberta.ca/female-urinary-incontinence-pathway

Urinary incontinence is leaking urine (pee) when you don't mean to.

You are the most important part of your healthcare team. This guide will help you to know what to expect as you work with your team to manage and treat urinary incontinence. If you have any questions along the way, please ask your healthcare team.

Before your appointment

- Write down how you feel, your symptoms, and any questions or concerns. Include things you find make your symptoms better, worse, and what you have tried before.
- Consider completing a bladder diary before you see your healthcare provider, or they may ask you to do one after your appointment.
- Symptoms you may have include leaking urine when you sneeze, cough, laugh, or exercise, needing to urinate often, or suddenly (e.g., leaking on the way to the washroom), or trouble emptying your bladder fully.
- Pain is not a typical symptom of urinary incontinence. If you have pain, let your doctor know.



Visit your healthcare provider

- Consider bringing a family member or friend to support you.
- Your healthcare provider will ask questions to assess what might be causing your incontinence and how it impacts you. Your health includes physical, emotional, spiritual, financial, and social elements.
- You will have a physical exam of your abdomen and an internal pelvic exam. You may also be asked to do a cough stress test to see how much urine you leak.
- Tell your healthcare provider about your use of pads, and how often you need to change your clothes because of incontinence.



Get your assessments & tests

- Your tests may include blood work, urine tests, and post-void residual (the amount of urine left in your bladder after you urinate).



Review your test results

- Talk with your healthcare provider so you know what your test and assessment results mean and how they will help your team and you decide what to do next.



Review your treatment & management options

- After your healthcare provider determines what has caused incontinence, you will work together on a treatment plan for you.
- Your treatment recommendations will include lifestyle changes and pelvic floor physiotherapy.
- Other treatments may include bladder training, medications, a pessary device, managing constipation, surgery, or a combination of these.



Talk with your healthcare provider about a referral

- Not all patients need to be sent to a specialist. If you are being referred, ask how long it will take to be seen and what you should do if you don't hear back.
- A referral is based on your symptoms, impacts of urinary incontinence on your day-to-day life, how you respond to non-surgical treatment, and your test results.



Start your treatment & watch your symptoms

- Take an active role in your treatment. If you have a change in symptoms or notice new symptoms, consider writing down what it feels like, the date, time and what you were doing when they began.
- Make sure to tell your healthcare team right away or call 811 if you have pain, a hard time urinating or emptying your bladder, post-menopausal bleeding, unexplained weight loss, loss of appetite, or night sweats.



Keep taking care of yourself

- Keep taking care of your overall health.
- Look for other healthy lifestyle resources and supports.



Whole-person health

Important Tips:

Need a family doctor?

ahs.ca/findadoctor

Need a translator?

Let your healthcare provider know

Need health advice?

Call Health Link at 811

Need to find programs and services in your community?

Call 211 or visit ab.211.ca