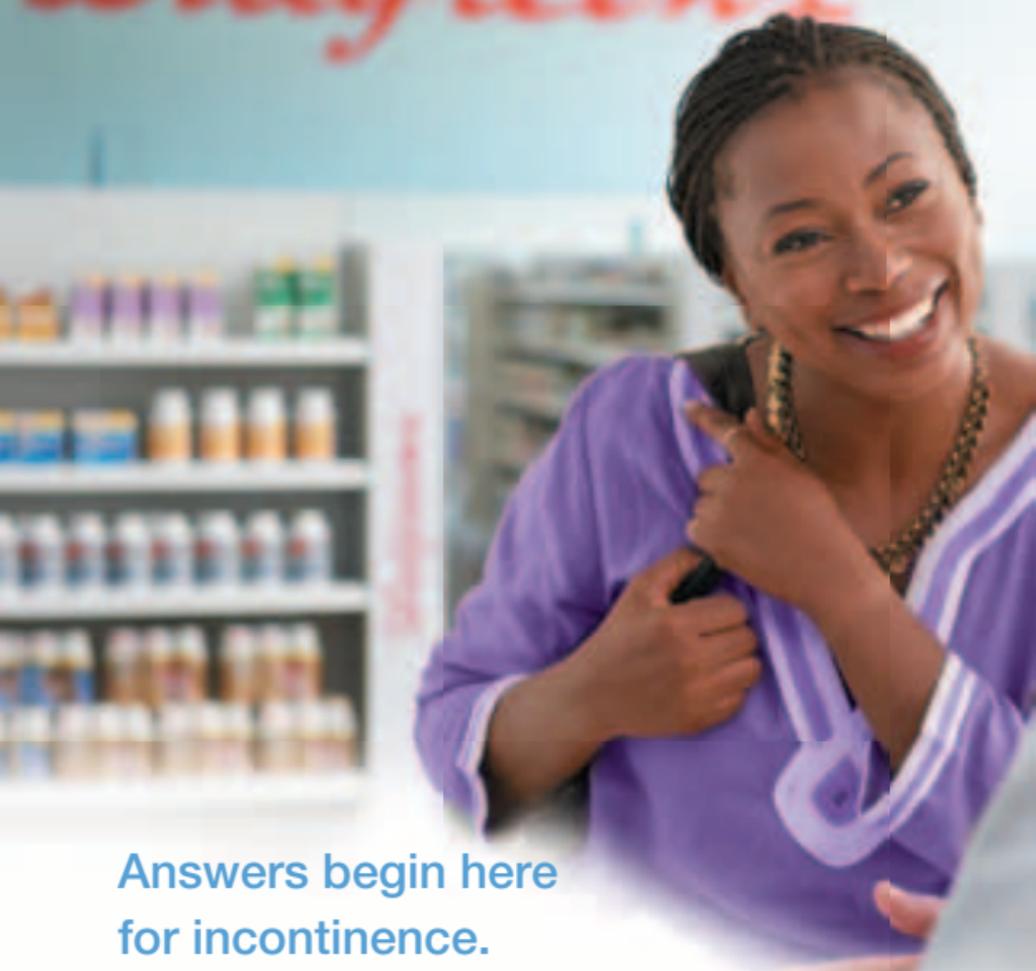


incontinence



Answers
at *Walgreens*™

Walgreens



Answers begin here for incontinence.

Incontinence is another name for the loss of bladder or bowel control. Incontinence is a symptom, not a disease, and can be caused by many health conditions and disorders. It affects many people as they age, and is more common among women. Incontinence may be awkward to talk about, but don't feel embarrassed. Millions of U.S. adults have bowel control and bladder control problems. You don't have to live with incontinence just because you are aging.¹ So talk with your healthcare professional about ways to improve or eliminate your symptoms. Read on to learn more about ways to manage incontinence.



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urinary incontinence



What is urinary incontinence?

Urinary incontinence is the involuntary loss of urine and bladder control. It can happen when the bladder muscles squeeze at the wrong time and force urine out of the body. Urinary incontinence can also happen when weak urethral sphincter muscles (muscles inside the body where urine comes out) can't prevent the urine from coming out.¹

What are the different types of urinary incontinence?

- **Stress incontinence** is the most common type of urinary incontinence, and is more common for women than men. If coughing, laughing, sneezing, exercise or other movements that put pressure on the bladder cause you to leak urine, you may have stress incontinence. Some of the potential causes are:

1. Pregnancy
2. Childbirth with vaginal delivery
3. Post menopausal hormonal changes
4. Obesity
5. Smoking

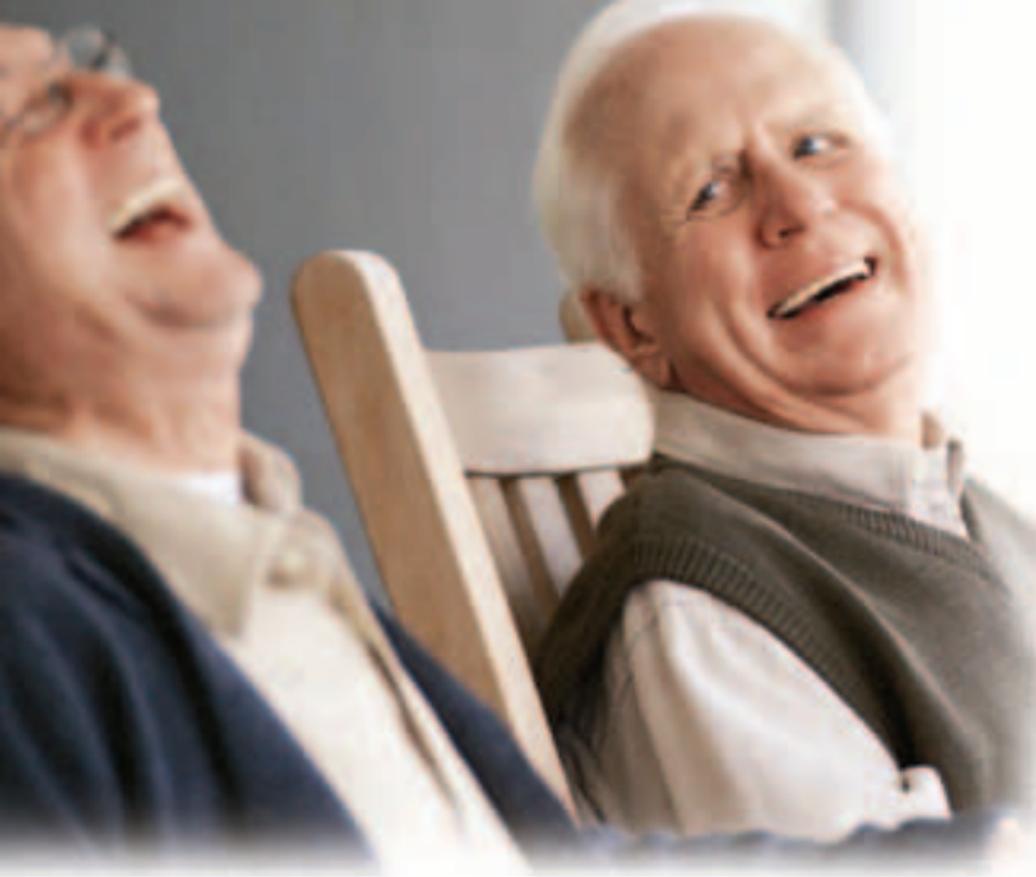
- **Urge incontinence or overactive bladder** is the involuntary loss of urine after you suddenly feel a strong urge to urinate. Another symptom is frequent urination in the daytime and at night. Possible causes include abnormal nerve signals to the bladder, or nerve damage that may have occurred due to stroke, Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, or from an injury due to surgery.²



- **Mixed incontinence** is when stress and urge incontinence happen simultaneously. This is the most common type of incontinence among women.
- **Overflow incontinence** is when the bladder is unable to empty fully. This can cause the amount of urine in the body to increase and overflow without warning. It is caused by weak urethral sphincter muscles.
- **Short-term incontinence** is caused by drinking alcohol or caffeine, drinking a lot of fluids in a short time, urinary tract infection, severe constipation, certain beverages and foods that cause bladder irritation, some medications, or coughing because of an illness. This type of incontinence stops after the cause goes away.³

be *i*nformed

Kegel exercises help tighten your pelvic floor muscles. It's easier to learn them when lying down. Locate the pelvic muscles by pretending to stop the flow of urine. Squeeze and hold these muscles for a count of 3, then relax them for a count of 3. Your goal is to try to do a set of 10, rest, then do two more sets each day. Your healthcare provider can give you more exact directions.⁵



How do I treat urinary incontinence?

Talk to your healthcare provider about your symptoms and discuss a treatment plan that can work best for you. Your healthcare provider will likely:

- take your medical history
- ask about your symptoms and the medications you use
- ask you to keep a diary of your symptoms
- give you a physical exam
- give you urine and blood tests to test for infection and other possible causes
- give you tests that measure leakage when you cough and how well you empty your bladder⁴



What are the treatment options for urinary incontinence?

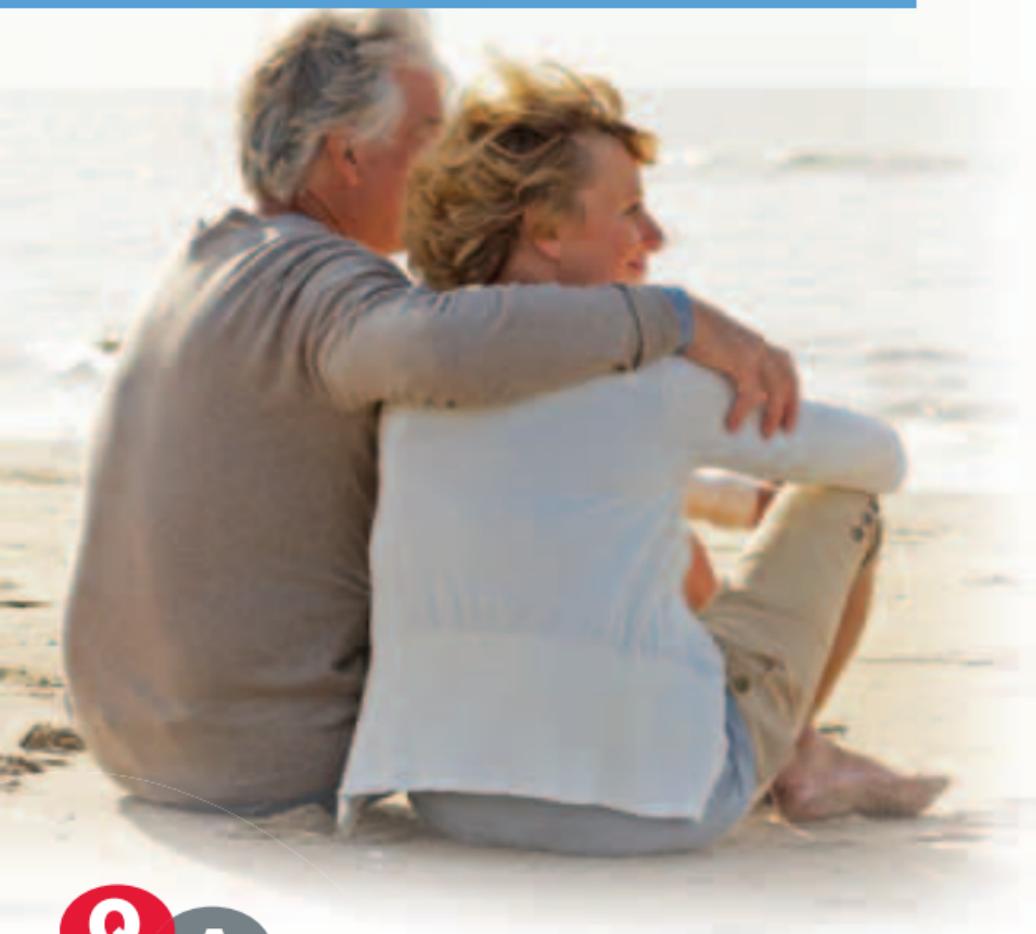
Your healthcare provider can tailor treatment options to your specific needs to help reduce or correct the underlying cause of your symptoms including:

- Exercises to help strengthen muscles and retrain the bladder. Bladder training can help you get better control of your bladder.
- Medications to help relax or control the bladder muscle, or slow down the amount of urine that is produced. For men with urinary incontinence, medication may be used to shrink the prostate to improve urine flow.
- If necessary, surgery.⁵



What are the lifestyle changes that may help me?

- Drink less fluids, which may reduce leakage from an overactive bladder, sneezing or coughing.
- Drink less caffeine, since caffeine increases the need to urinate.
- Cut back on your alcohol intake if it increases your frequency of bathroom visits.
- Lose weight and keep active.
- Quit smoking to reduce coughing and bladder irritation.
- Don't lift heavy objects.⁶



What is bowel incontinence?

Bowel incontinence is a loss of bowel control that can range from a small amount of leakage once in a while to a regular loss of bowel control. This problem develops when the muscles around the anus become weak and cannot hold the stool inside the body. Bowel incontinence can also occur when people stop feeling the urge to use the bathroom. It is an awkward and often embarrassing problem, but is not usually medically serious. Unfortunately, it can affect people's daily activities and ability to participate in social situations.⁷

How is bowel incontinence treated?

- Talk with your healthcare provider about a healthier eating plan, and discuss the right amount of fiber intake for you. For many people, fiber adds bulk to their stool and makes it softer and easier to control. Fiber can help with diarrhea and constipation. Fiber is found in fruits, vegetables, whole grains and beans. Fiber supplements are another common source of fiber.
- Avoid drinks with caffeine, alcohol, milk or carbonation if they trigger diarrhea. If diarrhea is causing your bowel incontinence, antidiarrheal medicines may be recommended to slow down your bowels and help control the problem.
- Your healthcare provider may recommend using laxatives, such as Citrucel and Metamucil, to develop more regular bowel patterns.
- Pelvic floor exercises and bowel training are two other options. If you are still having problems, your healthcare provider may discuss surgery as an option for you.^{8,9}



What is the connection between incontinence and skin problems?

Both urinary incontinence and bowel incontinence can irritate the skin. This can cause skin problems, including irritations and rashes, around the buttocks, hips, genitals and the area between the pelvis and rectum.¹⁰

How can I prevent incontinence-related skin problems?

- **Check your skin regularly.** Pay close attention to any change in color, or other signs of irritation.
- **Clean your skin right after exposure to urine or stool.** Use mild soap, or a soap-free cleanser, and warm water to gently wash the skin and rinse well.
- **Pat the area dry.** Do not rub, since this can irritate the skin.
- **Moisturize.** Use a skin moisturizer, but avoid products with ingredients that might irritate your skin such as: alcohol, urea, glycerin lactic acid and fragrances. Prevent excess moisture with a **protectant** such as petrolatum, zinc oxide or lanolin.¹⁰

Walgreens also carries all-in-one products that have cleansers, moisturizers and protectants.



What is the difference between a sanitary napkin and a bladder control pad?

- **Sanitary napkins** are for a woman's menstrual needs. They are not as absorbent as bladder control pads. In addition, they are designed to absorb blood, which is thicker and more slowly absorbed than urine.¹¹

- **Bladder control pads** are designed for the incontinence needs of both men and women.

Bladder control pads absorb large amounts of urine without leaking. They do this by transforming liquids into gel very quickly. This also eliminates odors.¹²





What products can help me manage my incontinence?

The right incontinence products can help you continue with your daily activities. Also, keep track of your urination and bowel movement schedule. This is important because changes in your schedule may signal changes in health. Talk to your healthcare provider if you notice any changes and if you have any questions.¹³

- For light bladder control and bowel control protection, use absorbent disposable pads. These are placed inside of underwear and collect urine.
- For greater protection, use disposable or reusable adult underwear, panties and briefs that look like regular underwear. They are available in many sizes and styles.
- Large disposable underpads can be placed under you on the bed to protect sheets while you sleep. They can also protect where you sit, like a chair or sofa.
- For cleaning around delicate areas, use disposable washcloths.¹⁴



choosing products

All incontinence products are designed to absorb wetness, control odor and keep your skin dry. Read on for more specific product features.



Bladder control pads for women

For very light to medium leakage

- For working, walking and relaxing
- Soft and comfortable for a dry feeling and a fit that molds to your body
- Side leakage protection



Male guards for men

For very light to medium protection

- Use with form-fitting underwear and during work and play
- Sticky strips hold guard in place
- Fits inside underwear





Fitted boxers and underwear for men

For medium to maximum protection

- For targeted maximum protection every day or night
- Looks, feels and fits like regular underwear
- Easy to put on and take off



Underwear for women

For medium to maximum protection

- Use day or night for maximum protection that stays put
- Soft and comfortable fit with side leakage guards
- Easy to put on and take off



Unisex underwear for men or women

For medium to maximum protection

- Designed for men's and women's incontinence needs
- Many sizes and absorbencies available, all with a secure fit for day or night
- Easy to put on and take off



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Questions about which incontinence products are right for you?

Walgreens pharmacists can help you find the best treatments to support your incontinence. Consult with one of our knowledgeable pharmacists in person or log on to **Walgreens.com/PharmacyChat** to “talk” live with a pharmacy professional any time, day or night.