

Urinary Symptoms, Catheters & Prostate Cancer Treatment



The information in this factsheet will help you to understand more about urinary problems that can happen after prostate cancer treatment. It explains what types of urinary problems can happen, how to manage them and gives advice about using a urinary catheter. It also gives information about available treatments and support. For more information call the National Cancer Helpline on **1800 200 700** or visit **www.cancer.ie**.

Urinary problems and prostate cancer

Having urinary problems may mean you have less control over passing urine or that you need to go to the toilet more often. Sometimes prostate cancer itself can cause these symptoms, or sometimes they can happen after treatment for prostate cancer.

Adjusting to urinary symptoms can be a difficult time both emotionally and physically. This factsheet aims to provide you with information that can help you at this time

What urinary symptoms might I have?

Different treatments for prostate cancer can cause different urinary symptoms afterwards. These symptoms include:

- Leaking urine.
- Passing urine frequently (more than 8 times a day).
- A sudden urge to go to the toilet quickly (urgency).
- Needing to go to the toilet quickly and leaking urine before you get there (urge incontinence).
- Difficulty emptying your bladder fully.
- Getting up more than twice at night to pass urine.

Urinary symptoms are most common after surgery for prostate cancer

National Cancer Helpline 1800 200 700

Going home from hospital with a urinary catheter

If you have prostate surgery you will go home with a catheter for a time. Occasionally you may need a catheter after other treatments for prostate cancer. A urinary catheter is a flexible tube that can be used to drain urine from your bladder when you cannot pass urine normally. Your surgeon will tell you how long you will need to keep your catheter in place. This can vary from 1 to 3 weeks. Before you go home, your nurse will show you how to look after the catheter.

The urine you make will pass through the catheter into a drainage bag. The catheter drainage bag will be worn inside your trousers and will be secured around your lower leg.

It is important that the urine can drain easily from your bladder and into the drainage bag.

- Try to drink plenty of fluids every day (between 1.5 and 2 litres is usually best) to help reduce the risk of getting an infection.
- Wash your hands before and after handling the catheter.
- When washing the catheter entry tip, wash it in a one-way direction away from your body.

Speak with your nurse if you notice any leaking around the outside of the catheter or if you notice that the catheter is not draining correctly.

You might experience bladder spasm while the tube is in place. This often feels like a strong urge to pass urine, despite the tube being there. Sometimes urine leaks around the outside of the tube when this happens too. It may happen when your bowels move. This is normal, but talk to your doctor or nurse if this happens to you a lot.

Urinary incontinence after prostate cancer surgery

After prostate cancer surgery the catheter is normally removed after a few weeks. When the catheter is removed many men suffer with urinary incontinence for the first time.

Urinary incontinence is leakage of urine that you can't control. This can vary from just a few drops when you cough, laugh or exercise or it can be a constant drip or trickle throughout the day.

After an operation to remove the prostate gland (radical prostatectomy) leakage of urine is a common side-effect, particularly in the early weeks after surgery.

Straight after surgery most men will have some leakage of urine. Often this means needing to wear a pad. It is not possible to predict how much leakage you will have, or how long it will last.

Symptoms usually improve with time. Some men notice an improvement within weeks of their operation. Usually there is an improvement by 3 to 6 months after the operation, but some men have leakage of urine for a longer time. Many men notice that leakage when they are in bed improves firstly, with a gradual improvement in daytime leakage following over time.

As time goes on some men regain full control over their urine flow. Some men get leakage of urine associated with activity, such as coughing, lifting or exercising. A small number of men have long-term urinary incontinence.

Sometimes after surgery to the prostate you can get a narrowing of the water pipe (urethra), known as a stricture. This can affect your flow of urine, making the stream weak and you may be unable to empty your bladder properly. If you notice these symptoms tell your urologist.

Incontinence can be very frustrating but it usually continues to improve for up to a year or more after surgery.

Radiation therapy and urinary symptoms

Radiation treatment for prostate cancer, such as radiotherapy or brachytherapy, can irritate and inflame both the bladder and the water pipe (urethra). Radiotherapy can cause swelling in the water pipe and blood in the urine too. This is known as radiation cystitis. Radiation cystitis means you may need to pass urine more often, both day and night. You may have a burning sensation when you pass urine, or you may have some difficulty passing urine. Symptoms often start during the course of radiation treatment or soon after brachytherapy seeds are put in. These symptoms usually improve over the weeks or months following radiotherapy but can go on long term for some men.

Radiotherapy can cause the bladder to shrink and become less 'stretchy' so it holds less urine. If this happens to you it may mean that you continue to need to pass urine frequently.

Occasionally radiation treatment causes a narrowing of the water pipe (urethra), known as a stricture. This can affect your flow of urine, making the stream weak. You may be unable to empty your bladder properly.

Rarely, radiation treatment can cause leakage of urine. This is more likely if you have had previous surgery to your prostate gland.

After brachytherapy a small number of men are unable to pass urine at all (urinary retention). A catheter (flexible tube) will need to be used to empty your bladder if this happens to you.

Managing urinary symptoms after radiation therapy for prostate cancer

If you have trouble with a slow flow of urine your doctor may give you tablets called alpha blockers to help ease this problem.

If you are bothered by going to the toilet frequently, needing to go quickly or leaking before you get to the toilet your doctor may advise lifestyle changes. You may also be given a tablet called an anti-cholinergic, as long as you are able to empty your bladder fully.

If you develop a narrowing of your water pipe (urethra) you will notice a slowing of the stream of urine. You will need to see your urologist if this happens. You may need a short procedure to widen your urethra to allow you to pass urine more freely again.

A few men have blood in their urine after radiation therapy. You may find that this happens to you, sometimes years later. Do talk to your doctor about it. Simple investigations will be needed to make sure that the bleeding is not caused by something else. Often the bleeding is slight and no treatment is necessary. Occasionally some treatment to the bladder is needed to try to stop the bleeding. Rarely a clot of blood can block your water pipe (urethra). You will need to see a doctor quickly if this happens to you.

How can I help myself?

There are a number of ways to help reduce the impact of urinary problems after treatment for prostate cancer. Different types of urinary problems are managed in different ways. Making some changes to your lifestyle may help you to manage your urinary problems. See our Hints and Tips box 'Ways to help urinary problems' for more information.

Ways to help urinary problems



Your doctor can help you to manage urinary problems, but there are things you can do yourself that can help:

- Caffeine may irritate your bladder. Caffeine is found in tea, coffee, chocolate and cola. Try cutting down on them or change to decaffeinated drinks to see if this helps you.
- Alcohol can increase the amount of urine you produce. You may find it helpful to cut down on alcohol, especially if you are troubled by getting up at night.
- Fizzy drinks, citrus fruits like oranges and lemons, tomatoes and spicy foods affect some people. Try avoiding them for a time to see if this helps you.
- Drink plenty of fluids every day – about 2 litres a day (average 6-8 cups). Not drinking enough will make your urine more acidic and this may irritate more.
- Keep a healthy weight for your height and eat a balanced diet. Your diet should be rich in fibre to avoid constipation. Constipation can put pressure on your bladder and make urinary problems worse.
- Exercise regularly. Exercise helps you to keep a healthy weight and helps bowel function too.
- Avoid constipation and don't strain during a bowel movement.

How do I manage urinary incontinence?

• Incontinence pads

Many men need to wear a pad to absorb leaks of urine. You may need pads for some weeks or months.

Male incontinence pads are available in different shapes, sizes and levels of absorbency. For more information see the section 'How do I choose the right pad?'

• Pelvic floor muscle exercises

Some men find some urine dribbles out after they have finished passing urine. This is common even in men who have not had prostate cancer. It happens because the water pipe or urethra does not completely empty out, leaving some drops in the pipe. You may be able to remove these drops by squeezing your pelvic floor muscles after passing urine. There is information in this factsheet on how to exercise your pelvic floor muscles.

• Other options

An external drainage system such as a sheath or container may be suitable if your incontinence is severe or long term. You can get advice on this from your doctor or nurse. You can get more information on this from the National Cancer Helpline.

Making some changes to your lifestyle may help you to manage your urinary problems.

Managing incontinence



Hints & tips

Incontinence can be distressing. Here are some practical tips to help you manage.

- Supportive underpants are better than boxer shorts at keeping pads in place.
- Plan ahead when you go out – pack a bag with pads, underwear and wipes and keep it with you or in your car.
- Make sure that you can reach the toilet easily – know where public toilets are before you need to go.
- Wear clothing that can be easily undone.
- Dark coloured trousers can be more practical than light colours if you are worried about urine leaks showing on your clothing.

How do I choose the right pad?

- The size, shape and absorbency of pads varies.
- Which style of pad you use depends on how much you leak and your personal preference. You may need to get some different sizes and different absorbencies until you find which ones suit you best.
- Some companies produce a male pouch-style pad alongside a larger pad.
- Net pants are available from pad suppliers – these can help to keep your pad securely in place.
- Wear the smallest size pad that you need. Using a pad that absorbs more than you need can lead to sore skin, as the pads contain a substance which can dry out the skin.

- As your leakage reduces you can wear a smaller pad that holds less.
- More absorbent pads are also available for heavier leakage or for night-time.
- Bed protectors are also available if you are concerned about leakage at night time.
- At this time you may find it easier to wear loose trousers, which are not as restrictive as regular trousers.

You may be able to get advice about how to cope with urinary leakage from your public health nurse or a continence advisor at your local HSE health centre. You can find your local health centre on the HSE website: <http://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/2/healthcentres>.

Skincare



Hints & tips

- Wash the area with warm, non-perfumed soapy water. Rinse and pat your skin dry – avoid rubbing the skin. Try to use a liquid soap with an in-built moisturiser, if possible.
- Use an appropriate absorbent pad that keeps the urine away from your skin. Try to use a pad that is right for the amount of leakage that you have. Overuse of pads that hold more than you leak may cause dryness of your skin. If you develop any rash or redness of the skin, use a water-based protective skin cream and talk to your doctor or public health nurse.

Where do I get pads?

Most pharmacies can provide a supply of pads. They may need to order them in for you. It is best to talk to the pharmacy staff to find which one suits your needs. If you prefer you can buy pad supplies by mail order or online. You will find a list of suppliers at the back of this factsheet.

Limited supplies of pads are available to medical card holders through your public health nurse. Access to a public health nurse can vary depending on whether you hold a medical card. This varies from area to area so ring and check the arrangements in your local area.

Exercises to help control urinary flow

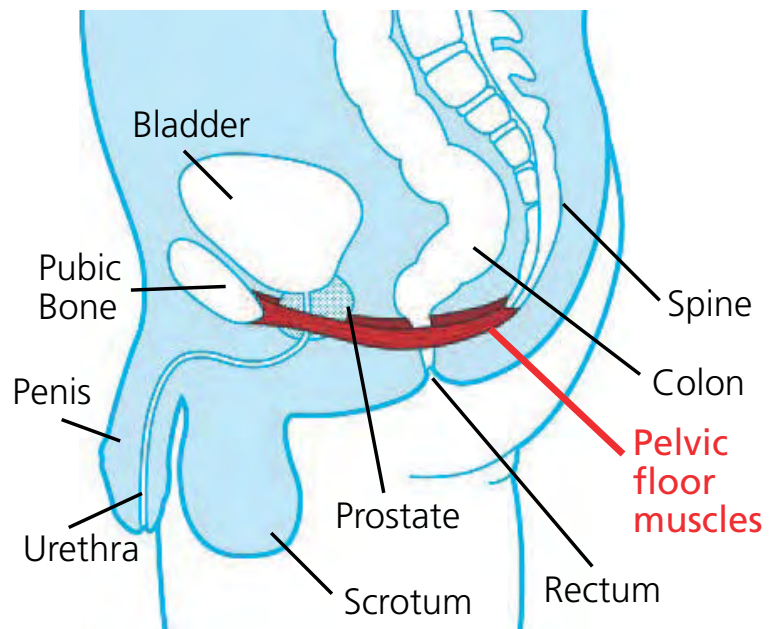
Doing pelvic floor or sphincter exercises may help to speed up the return of your urine control. Studies have also shown that some men with erectile dysfunction (impotence) have better function after carrying out pelvic floor exercises regularly.

You can ask a healthcare professional, such as a physiotherapist or specialist nurse or continence advisor, about how to do these exercises correctly. Some hospitals have a physiotherapist with a special interest in male incontinence. Ask your doctor if there is one in your hospital, or you can find a private physiotherapist. Alternatively, check with your doctor or public health nurse if there is a local continence advisory service which can support you. See the back page of this factsheet for details of the Irish Society of Chartered Physiotherapists (ISCP), who can help you find a local physiotherapist.

Which muscles should I exercise?

The pelvic floor is a hammock of muscles that supports the bowel and bladder in your abdomen. They also control the emptying of your bladder and bowel.

1. To find these muscles, start by sitting or lying comfortably with the muscles of your thighs, buttocks and abdomen relaxed.
2. Tighten the ring of muscle around your back passage, as if you are trying to stop passing wind. Try not to tense your abdomen or buttocks.
3. To feel the muscles around your urethra, imagine that you are passing urine and trying to stop the flow midstream and then restarting.
4. To check that you have found the right muscles, try stopping and starting your flow while passing urine. (This is a test only. Doing it often may interfere with how the bladder works normally.) You should then feel a definite lift and squeeze action of your pelvic floor muscles.



How should I do pelvic floor exercises?

Now that you have found the pelvic floor muscles you can begin to exercise them. Start the exercises lying down, and then move to sitting, then standing and walking while doing your daily activities. You can do them when watching TV, brushing your teeth or sitting at your desk at work. If you want to improve the strength and bulk of the muscle, you really need to make an effort to keep up the exercises.

- Squeeze and draw in the muscles around your back passage and water pipe (urethra), tightening and lifting up the muscles inside. Don't hold your breath! Try not to tighten your buttocks or thighs.
- Do a test squeeze – Count how long you can hold a strong squeeze before the muscles start to tire and 'flicker'. This will be the measure of your baseline hold, to decide how long you hold the squeeze for when you do your exercises. You may find you can hold for between 5 and 10 seconds, each man is different.
- Wait 10 seconds and repeat the squeeze or 'lift' – hold for as many seconds as you managed on your test squeeze.
- Repeat this up to a limit of 8–10 squeezes.
- Follow this by doing 5–10 short, strong squeezes quickly one after another.
- Aim to slowly increase the number of seconds you hold the contraction to 10 seconds over the coming weeks.
- If your muscle gets tired and 'flickers' or you cannot hold the contraction strongly, reduce the length of squeeze and number of times you repeat the exercise to a level you can manage. Build this up slowly.
- Do the whole exercise routine two to three times a day

Regular training using these exercises will build up your muscles. It will take some weeks to notice an improvement. When you have recovered control, you should continue doing the exercises twice a day for life.

'The knack'



'The knack' is a technique to help to reduce leakage.

'The knack' involves squeezing your pelvic floor muscles before you cough, sneeze or laugh or before or during other activities that can make leakage worse.

You should squeeze your pelvic floor muscles before and during strenuous activities to help prevent leakage of urine. You should gently squeeze the muscles at half your strongest squeeze when you are walking. This encourages the muscles to work during activity.

Most men find that urinary incontinence is worse towards the end of the day. This exercise helps to reduce muscle fatigue (tiredness).

You can use a strong pelvic floor squeeze to reduce a sudden urge to empty the bladder. Over time this may help to reduce how often you need to pass urine.

After you have passed urine, squeeze your pelvic floor muscles strongly to avoid after-dribble. If dribbling persists, massaging or 'milking' the water pipe (urethra) behind the scrotum can help to remove the last few drops that often dribble out a minute or so after you have passed urine.

Treatments for urinary incontinence

If your incontinence continues for more than 12-18 months your urologist may discuss further treatments to help you.

The options available to you will depend on the amount of leakage that you have.

- **Medication**

Some men may be given a medication called duloxetine (Yentreve®). As with all medication, some people experience side-effects, so talk to your doctor or pharmacist about this.

- **Artificial urinary sphincter**

An artificial urinary sphincter is a device to treat severe incontinence. It involves an operation to put a mechanical device with an inflatable cuff around your water pipe (urethra). The cuff comes with a balloon and a small pump which is put into your scrotum. You squeeze the pump when you need to pass urine and the cuff deflates for a short time to allow your bladder to empty.

After having a sphincter put in some men will no longer need to wear pads at all while others may still have a small amount of urine leakage and may need to carry on wearing a pad.

There can be complications with an artificial urinary sphincter, such as infection or failure of the device.

Your urologist will discuss the risks and advantages and disadvantages of this operation with you.

It may be helpful to take someone to the doctor with you to help you to remember all of the information.

- **Internal sling**

If you leak a moderate amount, one option for you might be to have a smaller operation to have an internal sling inserted. A sling is a small piece of material that presses your water pipe (urethra) closed to try to stop urine leaking out, without squeezing it so tight that you cannot pass urine properly.

The success of this operation varies: for some men it will reduce their leakage so they do not need to wear pads, for others it reduces their leakage but they still need to use some pads.

There can be some complications with a sling operation, such as discomfort for some weeks after the operation and a risk of infection.

Your urologist will discuss the advantages and disadvantages and risks of this operation with you.

- **Bulking agents**

Using bulking agents may be useful for men who leak a small amount. It involves injecting material around the inside of your water pipe (urethra) to fill out the lining to help close over the opening a little.

This procedure can be done under local anaesthetic and is a more minor procedure than sling or sphincter surgery. However, the success of this procedure is variable. The injections often need to be repeated at intervals. Your urologist will be able to advise you on whether it is suitable for you.

It is important to remember that you are not alone and help is available.

Narrowing of the urethra

Having an operation on your prostate gland or having radiation therapy can lead to a narrowing of the water pipe (urethra).

Narrowing of the urethra means that some men find it more difficult to empty their bladder fully. Often this starts as a slower flow of urine, dribbling of urine, needing to go to the toilet more often or getting urine infections. If you notice any of these symptoms tell your doctor or nurse about them. Occasionally men experience a sudden and painful inability to pass any urine. If this happens to you, go the Emergency Department of your local hospital where they can empty your bladder using a catheter tube.

Where a narrowing of the urethra is confirmed your urologist may need to do an operation to widen the urethra again. Your urologist will talk to you about what this means for you.

Living with urinary problems

Many people feel embarrassed by incontinence and urinary problems. You may find it affects how you feel about yourself and your dignity.

Some men might avoid going out as much when they are troubled by urinary leakage because they worry about changing pads or having an accident. It is often a matter of confidence and feeling sure that no-one will know you are wearing a pad. It can help to talk to a nurse or to someone who has experienced urinary leakage. Don't suffer in silence – talk to your public health nurse to share your worries. You can also call 1800 200 700 to speak with one of our specialist cancer nurses in confidence or to be put in contact with someone who has had treatment for prostate cancer.

Travelling and urinary problems



A trip away when you have urinary difficulties may seem daunting – but a little planning can help you to feel a bit more relaxed when travelling.

- Incontinence and urinary frequency can change the activities you want to take part in, so you may need to change the type of holiday you have.
- Pack a supply of equipment that will last the length of your trip – include pads and wipes in your hand luggage to use in the event of a delay. You might want to keep a change of underwear or clothing nearby too.
- If you go abroad consider taking a written list of what you need in the language of the country you are going to. An online translation service such as Google Translate can do this for you (www.translate.google.com). It may be useful to buy a portable urinal if you are travelling a long distance by car.
- A supply of plastic bags can help you to keep pads dry, and to store wet pads or clothing while travelling.
- If you are concerned about bed protection, contact your accommodation before you go or take a protective sheet with you.
- Find out about laundry facilities where you are going – or take a supply of washing powder so you can wash small items of laundry if needed.

Living with urinary side-effects can be an extra source of distress, on top of dealing with a prostate cancer diagnosis and going through treatment. Having urinary problems may also affect your relationship with others. It is important to remember that you are not alone and help is available. It is best to discuss your worries and concerns with another person – either a family member or doctor or nurse. The Irish Cancer Society can put you in contact with a specially trained volunteer who has had treatment for prostate cancer, through its Survivors Supporting Survivors programme. Call the Helpline on 1800 200 700 for details.

Pad information

These websites of pad manufacturers contain information about different types of pads and bed protection that is available.

Euron Product Information

Website: www.euron-info.com

Molimed Pad Information

Website: www.hartmandirect.co.uk

Tena Pad Information

Website: www.tena.co.uk/men/products

Mail order or online ordering

Fleming Medical Ltd

Tel: 061 304600

Website: www.flemingmedical.ie

Homecare Medical Supplies

Website: www.homecaremedicalsupplies.ie

Shops at:

Ballyhaunis

Knock Road

Tooraree

Ballyhaunis

Co. Mayo

Tel: 094 963 380

Castlebar

Old Westport Road

Castlebar

Co. Mayo

Tel: 094 904 4484

Dundalk

Williamsons Mall

Dundalk

Co. Louth

Tel: 042 932 5000

Galway

Terryland Retail Park

Headford Road

Co. Galway

Tel: 091 567 812

Mail order or online ordering continued...

Inhealth Ltd

Tel: 01 874 8727

Website: www.inhealth.ie

Liam Murray Chemist

20-21 Talbot Street

Dublin 1

Tel: 01 855 5733

Website: www.murrays.ie

Murrays Medical Equipment

Airton Park

Airton Road

Tallaght

Dublin 24

Tel: 01 463 6363 (Mail order/Retail sales)

The Mobility Shop

Clonminam Business Park, Portlaoise, Co. Laois.

Tel: 057 866 6730

Website: www.themobilityshop.ie

HSE Continence Adviser

Check with your local health centre.

You can find your local health centre on the HSE website <http://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/2/healthcentres/> or call the Infoline 1850 24 1850.

Useful organisations and websites

Survivors Supporting Survivors

To be put in contact with a volunteer who has dealt with a prostate cancer diagnosis call the National Cancer Helpline.

Tel: 1800 200 700

Email: helpline@irishcancer.ie

Assist Ireland

Information on daily living aids, mobility aids and assistive technology, including incontinence products.

Tel: 0761 079200

Website: www.assistireland.ie

Irish Society of Chartered Physiotherapists (ISCP)

Tel: (01) 402 2148

Email: info@iscp.ie

Website: www.iscp.ie

Prostate Cancer UK

Website: www.prostatecanceruk.org

Daffodil Centres

The Irish Cancer Society's Daffodil Centres provide cancer information, support and advice in local hospitals. Daffodil Centres aim to provide a wide range of information locally to anyone affected by or concerned about cancer.

For details of your nearest Daffodil Centre call the National Cancer Helpline on 1800 200 700 or visit www.cancer.ie.



For more information on urinary problems after prostate cancer treatment or for confidential advice from our cancer nurse specialists, call the **National Cancer Helpline** on **Freefone**

1800 200 700

(Monday–Thursday, 9am–7pm,
Friday 9am–5pm) or email
helpline@irishcancer.ie



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