



INCONTINENCE

Bromley

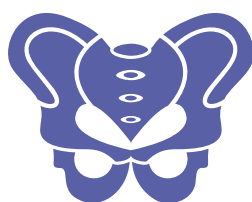
Well

HEALTH FACT SHEET

Updated December 2025

What is Incontinence?

Incontinence is the inability to control either your bowels or bladder, which leads to involuntary leaking. There are two types of incontinence; urinary incontinence and bowel incontinence, but these conditions can happen simultaneously.



What are some causes of urinary incontinence?

Stress incontinence – This refers to leaking when your bladder is under pressure, such as when you cough. This is caused by weakening of the muscles that are used to prevent urination.

Urge incontinence – When you have a sudden, intense urge to urinate due to overactivity in muscles that control the bladder.

Overflow incontinence – Also known as chronic urinary retention. This happens when the bladder does not fully empty during urination which can cause frequent leaking after going to the toilet. This is normally caused by some sort of obstruction which prevents the bladder from emptying properly.

Total incontinence – When you pass urine constantly or have frequent leaking due to your bladder being unable to store any urine.

SELF CARE TIPS

TRY PELVIC FLOOR EXERCISES

Strengthening your pelvic floor can help urinary and bowel incontinence. You can find guidance from the NHS about the correct way to do pelvic floor exercises, by searching for “10 ways to stop leaks”.

CUT DOWN ON CAFFEINE AND ALCOHOL

Caffeine and alcohol can irritate your bladder. They also act as diuretics which can increase urination.

To register with Bromley Well:
Freephone 0808 278 7898
Or register online:
www.bromleywell.org.uk/refer

Contact Lifestyle Support direct
07985 431484 / 07985 444210
or email
enquiry@bromleywell.org.uk

What are some causes of bowel incontinence?

- Long lasting constipation or diarrhoea.
- Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) or inflammatory bowel disease, such as Crohn's disease.
- Haemorrhoids.
- Childbirth or surgery that has damaged muscles or nerves that control your bowels.
- Conditions such as diabetes, stroke, or spina bifida.

What about treatment?

Some treatment options include:

- Reducing caffeine and alcohol intake.
- Pelvic floor exercises – sometimes aided by electrical stimulation.
- Bladder training – learning ways to wait longer between needing to urinate and passing urine.
- Exercising and eating a balanced diet.
- Incontinence products.
- Identifying and avoiding foods that make diarrhoea worse or making dietary changes, such as increasing high fibre foods if you are constipated, and reducing high fibre foods if you are experiencing diarrhoea.
- Medicine to reduce constipation or diarrhoea such as loperamide or a laxative.
- Having a regular routine of going to the toilet, such as directly after meals.
- Surgery can be considered if other treatments do not help.

SELF CARE TIPS

TREAT CONSTIPATION QUICKLY

Constipation could cause straining which weakens the pelvic floor. Eating plenty of fibre, exercising regularly, and ensuring you are hydrated can help.



AVOID FOODS THAT CAUSE IRRITATION

Keeping a food diary can help you identify foods that irritate your bladder or your bowel. Some common triggers include spicy and acidic foods.

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Some myths about incontinence

Myth 1: Drinking less fluids will help prevent urinary leaks.

This is not the case. Drinking less fluids can make your urine more concentrated, which can irritate the bladder and cause more urinary leaks. It is important to stay hydrated, but you may find it helpful to avoid drinks that contain alcohol and caffeine. If you notice that you wake up during the night to urinate, you might want to reduce the amount you drink right before bedtime. Your GP can advise you about the amount of fluids you should drink, depending on your particular bladder problem.

Myth 2: Incontinence is a natural part of aging.

Not true. While aging can weaken the pelvic floor muscles, incontinence is not something you should expect as a normal part of aging. If you are experiencing symptoms of incontinence, you should see your GP so they can check that incontinence is causing your symptoms. They can also help you find lots of treatments and strategies to make life with incontinence easier.

Myth 3: Hardly anyone has incontinence.

Not true! While living with incontinence can sometimes feel lonely or isolating, there are many people who struggle with urinary and bowel incontinence. It can feel awkward to talk about incontinence openly, but talking to people you trust can help you feel less alone. There are also helplines and support groups run by **Bladder and Bowel UK** and **Bladder and Bowel Community** where you can talk to other people experiencing incontinence.

HELPFUL TOOLS

CAN'T WAIT CARDS

Can't wait cards are for those with bladder and bowel concerns that cause an urgent need to use the bathroom. It allows you access to any public toilet.

RADAR KEYS

Radar keys can be used to open any accessible toilet with a lock.



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FURTHER RESOURCES

<u>Bladder Health UK</u> bladderhealthuk.org	A charity that offers support, help, and information for those struggling with bladder issues including incontinence.
<u>Bladder and Bowel UK</u> www.bbuk.org.uk	Charity that can help with Can't Wait cards. They also have a helpline and other online support.
<u>Bladder and Bowel Community</u> www.bladderandbowel.org	This charity can also help with Can't Wait cards. They provide information and support and also run online support groups.
<u>Radar Key</u> shop.disabilityrightsuk.org/products/radar-key	You can purchase a radar key which allows access to accessible toilets with NKS (National Key Scheme) locks around the country.
<u>Bromley Healthcare – Bladder and Bowel Service</u> www.bromleyhealthcare.org.uk	Service for people who are struggling with or have concerns around incontinence. They offer confidential advice and assessments and can also do home visits.

References: NHS conditions www.nhs.uk/conditions/urinary-incontinence/ www.nhs.uk/conditions/urinary-incontinence/10-ways-to-stop-leaks/

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