

Menopause and bladder and bowel control



This fact sheet has been developed to assist women looking for more information about menopause and bladder and bowel control.

Menopause is a time of change in a woman's life. One of the changes many women notice is increased difficulty with bladder and bowel control.

Common symptoms

Passing urine frequently and rushing to the toilet (urgency) to pass urine are the most common symptoms. Other symptoms include:

- Leakage of urine with coughs, sneezes, or exercise
- Leakage of urine on the way to the toilet
- Getting up twice or more over night to pass urine
- Frequent urinary tract infections
- Rushing to the toilet to open bowels
- Inability to control wind
- Constipation

You should not ignore these problems because they rarely go away and usually get worse over time. They often interfere with work, social activities, and sexual and personal relationships. It is

'over active'. An 'over active' bladder will cause you to pass urine more frequently. Combined with weak pelvic floor muscles, this makes it much more difficult to hold on or to put off going to the toilet to pass urine. A program of bladder training and pelvic floor muscles exercises may help you regain control. Vaginal oestrogen cream or a pessary is sometime prescribed to help with these symptoms.

3 Vaginal dryness

The loss of the hormone oestrogen results in vaginal dryness as the lining of the vagina is not producing enough mucus. The urethra (outlet tube for the bladder) also develops similar changes. In the vagina this may result in the normal bowel bacteria moving in increasing the risk of developing urinary tract infections. Oestrogen cream or a pessary may be prescribed to prevent further urinary infections. Personal hygiene is particularly important and all women should wipe from front to back. Cranberry juice drink or capsules may help prevent urinary tract infections.

4 Weight gain

Many women find they begin to gain weight with the onset of menopause. If your weight gain is significant, you run the risk