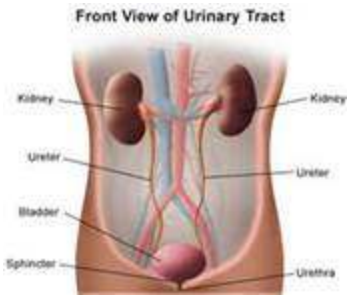
CERTIFIED MEN'S HEALTH COUNSELOR ONLINE COURSE: SESSION 8

- **Urinary Incontinence and Herbal Programs**

Problems in the Urinary Tract



The urinary tract system is made up of the kidneys, ureters, bladder, sphincter muscles and the urethra. Together, these organs, tubes, muscles and nerves work in conjunction to generate, stow and transport urine. Like most body function systems, the urinary tract is susceptible to disease and malfunction. There are many problems that can occur within the urinary tract system.

The Urinary System (How It Works)

Our bodies absorb nutrients from the foods that we eat. These nutrients are utilized and broken down by the body and eventually they are eliminated as waste products. The urinary system works together with other waste eliminating parts of the body such as the lungs, skin and intestines to insure that the body is free from waste products and functioning with the proper balance of water and chemicals. Each part of the urinary system has its own specific job to ensure this balance is achieved:

- **The kidneys**. It is the kidneys job to remove urea from the bloodstream. A part of the kidney, called nephrons, acts as filters to remove urea from the blood. Each nephron contains capillaries and a renal tubule. The urea is mixed with water and other components to form urine, which is passed through the nephrons to the renal tubule.

- **The Ureters**. The ureters are two thin tubes that are responsible for transporting the urine from the kidneys to the bladder.

- **The Bladder**. The bladder sits in the pelvic area and is the storage unit where urine sits and waits to be emptied when you use the bathroom. The bladder enlarges when it is full and shrinks in size when it gets emptied.

- **The Sphincters**. The sphincters are rounded muscles that tighten to keep urine from escaping from the bladder. The sphincter muscles clasp tightly together to prevent the flow of urine into the urethra before you are ready to use the bathroom.

- **The Urethra**. The urethra is the tube that is responsible for allowing urine to pass through and out of the body. When you feel that you have to urinate, the muscles of the bladder constrict, allowing urine to be squeezed out. Simultaneously, the sphincter muscles relax, allowing urine to exit the body as it passes through the urethra.

Urinary System Problems

As long as all of the components of the urinary tract are working properly as a well-oiled machine, then normal urination should occur without any problems. Problems within the urinary tract can occur as a result of illness, injury or aging. As we age, some of the components and muscles within the urinary tract may weaken, causing health issues such as:

- Frequent urinary tract infections
- Incontinence
- Blockage in the passage of urine
- Insufficient kidney filtering

Urinary System Disorders

There are a wide range of urinary system disorders that can be present within the urinary tract. Some of them are not severe and are relatively easy to treat, while there are others that can be life-threatening. Some disorders that are associated with the urinary tract include:

- **Benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH)**: This disorder affects the prostate gland in men. Also referred to as an enlarged prostate, BPH can interfere with a man's urinary function.

- **Painful bladder syndrome/Interstitial cystitis (PBS/IC)**: This chronic disorder affects the bladder and can cause great pain and discomfort, and leads to inflammation, scarring and a decrease in the amount of urine that the bladder can hold.

- **Kidney Stones**: Kidney stones are crystalized build-ups of mineral salts. These stones can occur anywhere in the urinary tract and can be painful, though some do not cause any pain at all. The idea is to remove the stones before any infection or blockage occurs.

- **Prostatitis**: This disorder is characterized as an inflammation in the prostate gland. This inflammation can cause painful urination and an increase in the frequency to urinate.

- **Proteinuria**: This disorder refers to the abnormal build-up of protein in a person's urine. This could be an indication that the kidneys are not functioning as well as they could be.

- **Kidney Failure**: this refers to the inability of the kidneys to perform their duties, such as removing waste from the blood.

- **Urinary Tract Infection (UTI)**: A UTI refers to the presence of bacteria in the urinary tract; most times this condition will likely need to be treated with a course of antibiotics.

- **Incontinence**: This disorder refers to a loss of bladder control and the inability to hold urine.

- **Urinary Retention**: This refers to the abnormal holding of urine within the bladder, meaning the inability to urinate.

There are many urinary disorders that are common to children, such as:

- Congenial defects of the urinary tract
- Urinary tract problems that are associated with strep throat infection
- Kidney problem that are induced by high blood pressure
- Kidney failure due to bacterial infection or birth defects

Diagnosing a Urinary System Problem

The most predominant test that is used to diagnose a problem in the urinary tract is the urinalysis. Your doctor will ask you to collect your urine in a special container; the collected urine will then be sent to the lab and tested. The tests will indicate any signs of infection or the presence of any irregular substances such as high levels of protein. Another test that your doctor may need to perform in order to diagnose a problem within the urinary tract is an urodynamic test. Your doctor will likely order this test if he suspects that there may be any problems with the bladder, ureters, urethra or sphincter muscles. This test measures the ability of the bladder to constrict and contract as it fills and empties.

Considerations

If you are experiencing any difficulty urinating or if you suspect that you may have a urinary tract infection or disorder, contact your doctor. While your doctor may be able to perform a urinalysis, you will likely need to visit an urologist to further determine the root of your symptoms if they continue.

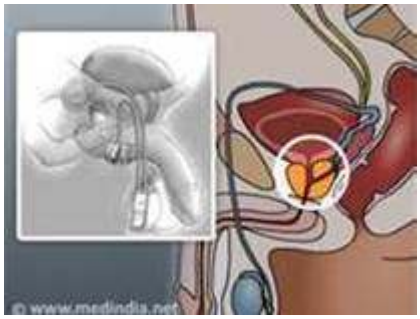
Urinary Incontinence

Urinary incontinence, or loss of bladder control, is a very common, though often embarrassing problem. The loss of urine can range from a few drops when a person laughs or coughs, to complete wetting. There are also many different treatment options available that give people the hope of returning to a more normal life.

Types of Incontinence

There are several different types of urinary incontinence, each with different causes and possible solutions:

- **Stress incontinence** is very common in women, especially after childbirth and as they age. It is characterized by the loss of urine after laughing, coughing, sneezing or something similar. The stress of pregnancy, childbirth and menopause on the structure that supports the bladder can cause the structure to weaken, allowing the bladder to move downward, preventing the muscles that close the urethra tightly from closing as they should. Additionally, these muscles can weaken with age.



- **Urge incontinence** describes the leakage of urine for no reason, then feeling the sudden urge to urinate. This is caused by bladder contractions that occur when they aren't supposed to. These contractions are likely caused by abnormal nerve signals triggering the bladder spasms. Certain medical conditions, hyperthyroidism and uncontrolled diabetes for example, my cause or worsen urge incontinence. Other traumas such as damage to the bladder nerves, a spinal cord injury, or conditions such as Parkinson's disease or multiple sclerosis can also harm bladder nerves and cause urge incontinence.

- **Functional incontinence** occurs in people with medical problems that interfere with thinking, movement or communication. These people may have difficulty reaching the bathroom, or communicating to a care giver that they need to go.

- **Overflow incontinence** is exactly what it sounds like. This is what happens when the bladder doesn't empty all the way and then it overflows. A doctor can check for this problem. It is more common in men, being very rare in women.

Other types of incontinence are mixed incontinence and transient incontinence. Both stress and urge incontinence can occur at the same time in women. This is known as mixed incontinence. Transient incontinence is temporary and is usually the result of medication, urinary tract infections or some other temporary condition. It usually resolves on its own as the causative problem resolves.

Causes

There are a number of causes of urinary incontinence, and as mentioned above, they vary based on the type of incontinence.

- Bladder damage
- Nerve abnormality in the bladder
- Weakened muscles around the urethra
- Weakened bladder muscles
- Neurological problems
- Physical handicap
- Illness
- Medication

Complications

When it comes to urinary incontinence, the majority of the complications associated with it are psychological. While those with urinary incontinence can develop skin rashes, the larger concern is the mindset of those who suffer from a loss of bladder control.

Urinary incontinence is an embarrassing problem to have, and people are often too ashamed to seek medical treatment. Because of this, they resort to adult diapers, which increase the feelings of shame and depression. It can also lead people to avoid leaving their homes for fear of having an accident while they are out in public. Sadly, most urinary incontinence is very treatable, meaning that these people don't have to be a slave to their bladder problems.

Treatment

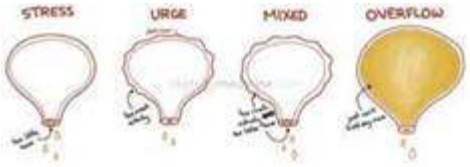
There are a number of treatments available for treating incontinence and most are highly effective.

- **Bladder retraining**: this is where a person urinates at timed intervals.
- **Kegel exercises**: these exercises work the muscles in the pelvic floor that control the flow of urine. Over time these exercises can strengthen muscles enough to end incontinence.
- **Medication**: the medications for urinary incontinence come from a class of drugs called anticholinergics. These medications prevent bladder spasms. These medications do come with some minor side effects.
- **Biofeedback**: this treatment uses electronic devises to track bladder and urethra activity in order to help patients gain control.
- **Neuromodulation**: this method uses an electrical stimulation device implanted in the body to help regulate the signals to the bladder as they come from the spinal cord.
- **Injections**: bulking products can be injected in the area around the urethra to help relieve incontinence caused by a weak urethral sphincter. Over time this product slowly eliminated from the body so it may need to be repeated.
- **Catheterization**: this is used in severe cases of overflow incontinence. People learn how to insert catheters in order to completely empty the bladder.

There is hope for those suffering from urinary incontinence, and it should not to be ignored. Most urinary incontinence can be easily treated, resulting in an improved quality of life.

Overactive Bladder (Urge Incontinence)

For some people, there are instances where that urge to urinate can be so strong, and come on so suddenly, they are unable to hold it. This is known as an overactive bladder. Many people suffering from an overactive bladder may become embarrassed by their condition and some even refrain from attending social situations in fear of having to frequently use the bathroom. An overactive bladder can typically be controlled when the source of the problem is identified.

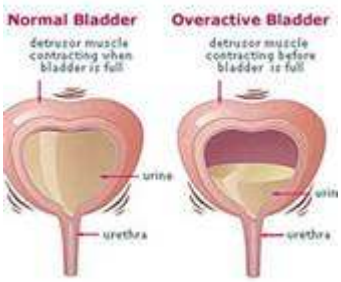


Definition

An overactive bladder is the sudden urge to urinate that is hard to control, leading to the unintentional loss of urine (urinary incontinence). Overactive bladder is caused by a defect in the bladder's ability to hold or store urine. Typically, the bladder will contract and empty when it is full. Individuals who have an overactive bladder tend to leak urine due to the effects of the bladder contracting at different times, no matter how full or empty it is.

Symptoms

The symptoms of an overactive bladder can be disruptive and hinder everyday life. Common symptoms include:



- A sudden, overwhelming urge to urinate
- Inability to hold urine
- Loss of urine
- Frequent urination, more than 8 times per day
- Frequent nighttime urination

Causes

The ability of the bladder to fill, store and empty urine is a complex process involving muscle activity, brain function and kidney function. A disruption anywhere along the process can produce symptoms of an overactive bladder. Generally an overactive bladder is the result of the bladder muscles involuntarily contracting, however, many other conditions can cause these symptoms, including:

- Neurological disorders such as multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's Disease and stroke
- Poor kidney function
- Diabetes
- Urinary tract infections
- Bladder cancer, tumors or stones
- Enlarged prostate
- Constipation
- Excessive alcohol intake
- Excessive caffeine intake
- Certain medications

Risk Factors

An overactive bladder is not considered to be a part of the normal aging process; however, it is more common among older adults, as well as women. This may be due in part to the fact that as we age, our bodies become more vulnerable to the disorders that can produce symptoms of overactive bladder. These conditions include:

- Diabetes
- Enlarged prostate
- Cancer
- Stroke

Diagnostic Tests

If you are experiencing symptoms of an overactive bladder, your doctor will likely complete a physical examination and go over your medical history, as well as other tests to identify what may be contributing to your symptoms. You may also be referred to an urologist to assess your bladder function. Diagnostic tests include:

- Urine sample
- Neurological exam
- Ultrasound of the bladder

- Measurement of post void residual urine
- Measurement of urine flow rate
- Electromyography to evaluate bladder nerve impulses
- X-ray of the bladder
- Search for bladder abnormalities using cystoscopy

Treatment Options

In order to best treat your overactive bladder, your doctor will likely recommend a variety of options including:

- Limiting fluid consumption
- Bladder training
- Double voiding
- Urinating every 2 or 4 hours
- Kegel exercises
- Using a catheter to empty the bladder fully
- Lining the underwear with absorbent pads
- Medications to relax the bladder
- Surgery to increase the bladder volume, in extreme cases
- Removal of the bladder and replacement with a bag to collect urine, in extreme cases

Home Remedies

You may be able to control the symptoms of overactive bladder by making some changes to your lifestyle. These changes include:

- Sustaining a healthy weight. If you are obese or overweight you may have symptoms of overactive bladder, including urinary incontinence due to excess weight pushing on the bladder. Losing weight may help to eliminate your symptoms.

- Controlling fluid intake. Be sure to ask your doctor how much fluid you need to be taking in and stick to that amount. As long as you are taking in a safe amount of fluids, there is no need to drink in excess of that amount. Simply restricting your fluid intake may help to relieve your symptoms.

- If you find that caffeinated or alcoholic beverages worsen your symptoms, avoid them.

Alternative Medicine

Although there are no alternative medical procedures that have been deemed effective in the treatment of overactive bladder, there are some that may be helpful in treating your symptoms, including:

- **Using Biofeedback**. Biofeedback helps you to gauge and obtain feedback from your body with the help of electrical sensors. These sensors allow you to learn how to make slight changes like contracting your pelvic muscles upon feelings of urgency in order to avoid incontinence.

- **Acupuncture**. Acupuncture is the use of thin needles to treat certain conditions. Many health professionals believe that acupuncture may be effective in treating the symptoms of overactive bladder.

Prevention

You may be able to prevent the onset of symptoms of overactive bladder by choosing to make subtle changes in your lifestyle, including:

- Engaging in daily physical activity
- Avoiding alcohol and caffeine
- Not smoking
- Managing any underlying medical conditions
- Strengthening your pelvic floor muscles through Kegal exercises

Considerations

If you are having symptoms of an overactive bladder, be sure to make an appointment with your doctor. You may want to write down your symptoms and frequency of urination, as well as a list of all of your current medications and any questions that you may have. If you are living with an overactive bladder, it can be difficult at times.

Seeking out support groups or Internet resources may help you to cope with this issue and instruct you how to educate your family and friends about overactive bladder. You should not have to go through this alone, and support groups can provide you with coping strategies and can give you the motivation to try home remedies and keep a positive outlook.

Many people suffer from an overactive bladder. Generally, no one cause is found, and an overactive bladder is rather a collection of symptoms that may require a variety of treatments. Many patients need to try a variety of approaches to find which ones work best for them. Keep a positive outlook and seek out support when needed.

Important Things Your Urine Color Can Tell You

Everyone knows that normal, human urine is yellow in color, but many have often wondered what it means when the liquid they are expelling is a completely different color. Discoloration, murkiness and even blood can cause panic and alarm at the thought that there is something physically wrong with your body. If you're curious about what you can learn just by looking at your urine, then read on.

What is Normal Urine Supposed to Look Like?

The normal color of urine can range from a translucent yellow to amber. It is a sterile liquid that is expelled from the body and is a product of cellular metabolism. The appearance of your urine can be affected by certain foods you eat, beverages you drink and diseases that you may be afflicted by. The yellow to amber color that normal urine has is due to a pigment called urochrome. When your urine is darker (amber), this usually is a sign you aren't getting enough fluids. If your urine is on the darker spectrum of what it should normally look like, there's typically no cause for alarm. All you need to do is get more fluids in your body, preferably water.

Why is My Urine Clear?

Typically, the clearer your urine is, the healthier you should be. Light yellow to clear colored urine is a sign that your body is properly hydrated, and is typical of those who regularly drink water. However, clear urine can also appear in those who are taking in too much water, and may be dangerously close to overhydration, or water intoxication. An increase in urination, especially clear urine, without adequate water intake can be a sign of diabetes.

Some may often wonder why their urine turns clear after excessively drinking alcohol. The amount of liquids your body took in is one reason for increased urination, but the other reason is alcohol is a diuretic, which means it increases the rate you have to pee. Because alcohol forces an increase in urination, your body is required to extract water from other organs since you're peeing all that water down the drain, along with other important electrolytes in your body. This is why too much alcohol makes you sick and leaves you with a bad headache.

Abnormal Urine Colors

Sometimes your urine will take a dive completely off the light yellow to amber gold color chart. If this is the case, here are several possible urine colors you might be seeing and what they mean:

- **Green or blue urine:** this is typically caused by something you ingested. Certain foods and beverages and medications have the ability to make your urine these colors, especially if they contain a blue dye. Asparagus has not only been known to make your urine appear greener, it can also affect your urine's odor.

- **Red or pink urine:** certain foods that are naturally red can cause these color changes in your urine. Laxatives and some prescription drugs can also be the cause of red urine. In some cases, blood in your urine stream can be a sign of a medical condition like an enlarged prostate, bladder stones or even kidney cancer.
- **Murky urine**: this can be a sign of a urinary tract infection (UTI) or kidney stones. For men, semen left in the urinary tract can also cause urine to be cloudy or murky.

- **Orange urine:** blackberries, beets, rhubarb and certain medications with dyes can cause this. Medical issues that can cause orange urine include jaundice and dehydration.
- **Foamy urine:** this doesn't affect the color or your urine. Instead, it accompanies urine at certain times, which may be cause for alarm. Excessive foam in your urine is typically a sign of ingesting too much protein.

Seeking Medical Attention

Often times, a drastic change in urine color is caused by something you ingested. Take note of any color changes, and record when and how often they occur. If you can rule out food or medication as possible causes for your change in urine color, you should contact your physician. Also think about any other possible symptoms you may be experiencing that are related to a major health issue:

- Are you urinating more frequently than usual?
- Is urination painful for you?
- Are you having trouble urinating? Has urinating become more infrequent than usual?
- Are you urinating only small amounts at a time?
- Do you wake up frequently at night to urinate?
- Are you producing more urine than usual?
- Are you leaking or dribbling urine uncontrollably?

While it is best not to panic at the first signs of abnormal urine color, you should not ignore it either. Consult a physician to ensure you aren't suffering from something serious. If a change in urine color is accompanied by any of the above symptoms, notify your doctor immediately.

Water Intoxication: The Dangers of Overhydration

We've all heard about how great water is for the body and how you should be drinking lots of it every day. However, even with water, too much isn't always a good thing. Drinking more water than your body can handle can have some serious side effects that can lead to major health complications and even death. Read this article to learn more about water intoxication and the dangers of overhydration.

What Is Water Intoxication?

Water intoxication (also known as overhydration or hyponatremia) is a physical condition that results from an abnormal balance of electrolytes in the body. When an overabundance of water causes an imbalance between water and electrolytes in the body, cells start to swell up. This creates a very dangerous situation as swollen cells in the brain lead to intracranial pressure. As this pressure worsens, the blood flow to the brain can be interrupted, leading to dysfunction in the central nervous system, seizures, coma or even death.

Risk Factors

Typically, water intoxication is caused by drinking too much water. This is particularly dangerous with water-drinking contests where contestants are challenged to drink more than any other participant without urinating. In fact, several people have died from partaking in these challenges.

While drinking too much water is the main cause of this problem, there are also some medical conditions, physical conditions or lifestyle choices which come with a higher risk of water intoxication. Those conditions include:

- **Kidney disease, syndrome of inappropriate anti-diuretic hormone (SIADH) and heart failure.** With each of these conditions, the body's ability to excrete water is impaired, making water intoxication more of a threat.

- **Age.** Many older adults have lower amounts of sodium (an electrolyte) in the blood, so the risk of an electrolyte imbalance is increased. Additionally, infants who drink too much water or diluted formula can suffer from water intoxication.

- **Hormonal changes.** Certain changes in the adrenal gland or the thyroid can result in low sodium levels.

- **Severe vomiting or diarrhea.** The extra loss of fluids and electrolytes can put people at risk.

- **Diet.** A low-sodium diet also increases the risk for an electrolyte imbalance.

- **Drugs.** Thiazide diuretics and certain pain medications and antidepressants may cause increased urination or sweating. Ecstasy also increases the risk for overhydration.

- **Climate change.** Moving to or visiting a much hotter climate than you're used to can increase sweating and your risk for an electrolyte imbalance.

In addition to these risk factors, people who compete in endurance sports or who work outdoors in hot temperatures are also at a higher risk for water intoxication. These people are prone to losing more sodium through perspiration. As the athletes or workers drink large amounts of water to rehydrate themselves, they typically are unable to restore the level of sodium needed in the body to keep the proper balance, leading to hyponatremia.

Symptoms

The key symptoms of overhydration include:

- Fatigue
- Headache
- Confusion
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Irritability
- Restlessness
- Muscle spasms or cramps
- Seizures
- Unconsciousness

In severe cases, overhydration can also lead to coma or death, so it is very important to be aware of these symptoms-particularly if you are at a higher risk for this condition.

Treatment

For mild hyponatremia, a reduction in the intake of fluids is often sufficient for solving the problem. Eating a small amount of salty foods can also be helpful if you have lost excessive electrolytes by sweating. Keep a close eye on your symptoms to make sure that they don't worsen.

With more severe cases of hyponatremia, you may need to take medications to offset the feelings of nausea and headaches. If symptoms worsen, you may need to visit the hospital in order to receive intravenous (IV) fluids to even out the electrolyte levels in your body.

Chronic cases of hyponatrema may require hormone therapy depending on the causes behind the condition. In some cases, hormone replacements can be used to keep electrolytes balanced.

Prevention

The easiest way to prevent overhydration is to only drink as much water as you need. That amount will vary depending upon the amount of exercise you participate in and whether you have any conditions that increase your risk of water intoxication. But, in general, a person should use their urine color to determine their hydration level. Pale yellow urine usually indicates that you are drinking enough water, while a darker yellow mean that you need more water.

If you are participating in an endurance sport like a marathon or triathlon, focus on only drinking as much fluids as you lose due to perspiration during the competition. Consider drinking some sports drinks which include electrolytes during training and racing. These same methods apply to those who work outdoors in high heat conditions.

If you have a medical or physical condition that puts you at risk for overhydration, make sure you get proper treatment and take your medications as directed to avoid this issue.

When to See a Doctor

If you suffer from mild but chronic hyponatremia, ask your doctor if there are any changes you can make in your diet or medications in order to reduce your symptoms. You may also want to see an endocrinologist about possible hormonal imbalances that could be causing your symptoms.

See a doctor if you experience severe symptoms associated with water intoxication. If any of the symptoms become extreme or intolerable or if you have seizures or fear you may lose consciousness, get medical assistance immediately.

Herbal Program for Incontinence

Involuntary discharge of urine. Usually associated with problems in the circulatory system or prostate.

Herbals:

- JP-X or Juniper Berries (Urinary System Tonic)
- Kidney Activator or KB-C (Chinese Kidney/Bone)
- Dandelion (Liver and Kidney Tonic)
- Marshmallow – To reduce inflammation
- Golden Seal (Antiseptic)
- Men's Formula w/Lycopene (Prostate/Glandular Balance) or P-X (Prostate)
- He Shou Wu – To regulate and support urinary function

Vitamins, Minerals, and Other Supplements:

- Urinary Maintenance (Urinary System) – To strengthen and build
- Probiotic Eleven or Bifidophilus Flora Force – For friendly bacteria
- Astragalus, Grapine H/P or Defense Maintenance – To build the Immune System
- ASEA – Native to the body. Absorbed directly into the cell to build the immune system

Essential Oils:

- Wild Oregano
- Tea Tree

Diet:

- Black cherry juice, asparagus, watermelon seed tea.
- Eliminate caffeine; avoid coffee, tea and chocolate.

CERTIFIED MEN'S HEALTH COUNSELOR ONLINE COURSE - SESSION 8
QUESTION & ANSWERS

NAME: _____
ADDRESS: _____
CITY, STATE, ZIP, PC: _____
PHONE: _____
FAX: _____
E-MAIL: _____

Please be sure to fill out the information above, complete the test and e-mail or mail it back to us at iridology@netzero.net or P.O. Box 485, Weimar, CA, 95736-0485. We will grade your question & answer session and will let you know if we have any questions or concerns. Please use a separate sheet to do this assignment.

1. What is Incontinence?
2. What are the organs of the urinary system?
3. What are the medical treatments of incontinence?
4. What alternative treatments can be used for incontinence?
5. Why would someone have green urine?