

Coping with prostate cancer and treatment:

Urinary changes



Helpful resources

- www.prostatecancer.ca
- Canadian Cancer Society
- Men Talking to Men About Prostate Cancer DVD (ask your health care team for a copy).

Sources:

Michigan Cancer Consortium (2009). Managing symptoms of prostate cancer. www.prostatecancerdecision.org/helpAfterTreatment.htm

Prostate Cancer Canada (2013). Incontinence. Retrieved from www.prostatecancer.ca/Prostate-Cancer/Care-and-Support-Post-Treatment/Side-Effects-of-Treatment#Incontinence

We would like to acknowledge the Michigan Cancer Consortium for providing us with permission to adopt their prostate education materials.

Radiation and the effects on urinary patterns

The bladder is where the urine is stored and the urethra is a tube that carries the urine from the bladder to the outside of the body. Radiation can affect cells in the bladder and urethra, which can cause changes in your urinary habits. Radiation treatments can also damage the muscles that control urine flow.

Commonly, men may experience an increase in frequency of urination during the day and night. Other symptoms may include urinary urgency (a sudden need to urinate), a weak stream of urine, dribbling and discomfort when urinating.

Tips to manage common side effects:

- Try to drink a lot of fluids: 8 glasses (8 ounce or 250 mL) of water each day. This will decrease your chance of developing a bladder infection.
- Avoid fluid in the evenings: you may want to limit the amount of fluids you drink after 6pm to help you from waking up during the night to empty your bladder.
- Avoid alcohol and caffeinated beverages as much as possible. These drinks increase the need to empty your bladder.
- Go to the bathroom frequently - when you feel the need to go, go! This will also help you prevent a bladder infection.

Other helpful hints:

- Train your bladder and empty it on a schedule. Start by passing urine every hour whether you have the urge to go or not. Slowly increase the time between visits to the bathroom.
- Protect your bed. If needed, use a waterproof mattress cover or smaller disposable pads. If you need to pass urine during the night, keep a urinal next to your bed.
- Protect your clothes. Wear pads that absorb urine inside your underwear (or adult protective undergarments). It is OK to use these and others won't notice them. Pads come in a range of sizes and vary in how much urine they absorb. Choose pads that are right for your body size and the amount of leakage you have. Keep an extra pad (and maybe also an extra pair of underwear and pants) with you when you're away from home. An athletic or duffel bag can keep these private.
- If leaking urine continues to bother you, inform your health care team. There are medicines and surgical options your doctor can prescribe to help.
- If you feel the need to cough or sneeze and are worried about leaking, cross your legs and do a Kegel (see next page for Kegel instructions).

When to call your health care providers

If you experience any symptoms of increase in frequency, urgency, a weak stream of urine, dribbling, and discomfort, please inform your health care team. If you have any signs of infection (such as blood in your urine, burning, aching back, fever, or inability to urinate for 12 hours), call your health care team immediately. They may request you submit a urine sample and prescribe a medication to ease the symptoms.

Kegel exercises

Kegel exercises help strengthen muscles that control urine flow, and are a common recommendation for men who are experiencing incontinence. Frequently men will complete a Kegel exercise by stopping the urine midstream and holding for three seconds or by tightening muscles when they don't want to pass gas. You can tighten and release these muscles at any time without anyone knowing.

Directions for Kegel exercises:

Long Kegels:

- Tighten the muscles between your scrotum and anus for 3 to 5 seconds. Then relax the muscles for 3-5 seconds.
- Repeat this pattern 10 times.
- Your goal is to work up to tightening the muscles for 10 seconds, followed by relaxing for 10 seconds. It may take several weeks or longer to be able to do this.
- When you're tired, rest for 30 seconds, and then switch to short Kegels.

Short Kegels:

- Tighten your muscles for 1 second and then relax them for 1 second. Repeat this pattern 5 times.
- Rest for 10 seconds. Repeat steps a total of 5 times.

Remember to exhale when you tighten your muscles. We recommend that you start slowly and build up over time.

Below is a website link that provides information about providers by city location that offer physiotherapy for urinary incontinence. The service may require self pay or may be covered by extended health benefits.

<http://pelvichealthsolutions.ca/find-a-health-care-professional/ontario-physiotherapists/>



Contact:

If you have any questions or concerns,
please call the cancer centre at 519-749- 4300 ext. 4380