

## **Incomplete Emptying of the Bladder (Overflow Incontinence)** **Contenance Series Information leaflet 3**

### **What is Incomplete Emptying?**

There are a number of reasons why a person may find it difficult to urinate. Some people may find that it is hard to urinate and they really have to strain and force urination. Others may find that they experience feelings of urgency and frequency and when urinating only a small amount comes out. Others may find that their urinary stream is very weak and intermittent.

### **Causes of difficult urination**

There are two main causes for difficulty in urinating. Difficulty can be attributed to either a blockage to the flow of urine through the urethra or a weakened bladder. The actual bladder muscle can become so weak that it can no longer contract strongly enough to empty. There could also be damage to the nervous system which makes it impossible for the bladder to contract or for you to give it the signal to contract. This can be found with Parkinsons Disease, Multiple Sclerosis, Alzheimer's and even Diabetes.

Another cause could be insufficient urine in the bladder to enable urination.

There could also be a learned voiding dysfunction, (inability to pass urine) – for example, a fear to use the toilet or to use toilets outside the home.

The most common cause of difficult urination for men is a blockage due to the prostate. The reason that urinating becomes difficult is because it takes a higher pressure to force the urine out of the urethra (the opening tube) that is partially blocked by the prostate.

## **Patient Information**

**Contenance Service 0208 539 5522 Extension 5509**

Whipps Cross Road, Leytonstone, London, E11 1NR [www.whippsx.nhs.uk](http://www.whippsx.nhs.uk)

For women, one of the common causes of difficulty in urinating is trying to urinate when there is too little urine in the bladder, as mentioned previously. A woman may try to urinate with little urine in the bladder because they have an overactive bladder. It can also be caused by prolapse, fibroids and many other factors.

### **Symptoms of difficult urination**

The most common symptoms of difficulty in urinating are a weak stream and hesitancy. Hesitancy means a delay in urinating. You can experience an urge to go to the toilet and once there, nothing comes out. Some people find that they have to push with their abdominal muscles and strain to release urine.

A weak stream can be a thin stream and it could also be an intermittent or dribbling stream. You may stop and start urinating a few times before you are completely finished.

It is important to seek help if you experience any of the symptoms described above. A continence nurse is a health care professional who specialises in bladder and bowel problems. The local advisors numbers are listed on page 3.

### **Catheterisation**

In some cases, you may be advised that catheterisation will help you to manage your problems. This is a tube inserted into your bladder which is held in place by a balloon. This procedure would only be done with your consent in partnership with your nurse or doctor.

## **Intermittent catheterisation**

Intermittent catheters are hollow tubes used to drain urine from the bladder. Intermittent catheterisation means they are inserted at intervals throughout the day, or when you feel the need to go to the toilet. Once the urine has drained out, the catheter is removed. This is called intermittent self-catheterisation (ISC).

Most catheters for ISC are used once and then thrown away. Some are designed to be cleaned and reused. If possible, it may be better if you are taught to perform intermittent catheterisation on yourself at an interval specified by your doctor. Most people find that catheterising intermittently is not as difficult or as uncomfortable as they had first imagined.

## **Indwelling catheterisation**

If it is not possible to catheterise intermittently, it may be necessary to use an indwelling catheter. An indwelling catheter is a catheter that is passed through the urethra and stays in the bladder continuously. The other end of the catheter is attached to tubing to a drainage bag that stores the urine which is periodically emptied. This procedure would be done only with your consent and in partnership with your nurse or doctor.

## **Where can I get more information?**

Whipps Cross Continence Service	0208 539 5522 Extension 5509
Waltham Forest Continence Service	0208 430 8258
Redbridge Continence Service	0208 822 3871
Newham Continence Service	0208 475 2011
West Essex Continence Service	01279 698901
Bladder and Bowel Foundation	01536533255

[www.bladderandbowelfoundation.org](http://www.bladderandbowelfoundation.org)