

## DURING AND AFTER TREATMENT

# Genitourinary Distress: Common Side Effect

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For genitourinary distress, standards of care are based on established evidence-based practice.

## Definition

- Genitourinary distress is accidental urine leakage that can dampen underwear or saturate clothes. It is a sense of urgency, frequent urination, and/or pain or discomfort when urinating.

## Incidence

- Genitourinary distress is found in 35%–75% of patients with prostate cancer.
- It is also associated with hormonal changes because of endocrine therapy or menopause, radiation therapy to the pelvis, and pelvic surgery, which weakens muscles.

## Assessment

- Evaluate for stress, overflow, or urge incontinence.
- Perform a patient history and physical examination.

## Prevention

- Recommend weight loss if overweight or obese.
- Advise to avoid alcohol and caffeine as well as spicy foods and foods high in acid.
- Recommend exercises to strengthen bladder muscles (e.g., Kegel exercises).
- Suggest good toilet habits, such as scheduled toilet trips, learning to lengthen the time between urges to use the toilet, and managing fluid intake (e.g., limiting fluids to 2 L per day, reducing the intake of fluids before bedtime).

## Interventions and Management

- Encourage pelvic floor muscle strengthening, ideally with a physical therapist.
- Encourage bladder training.

- Suggest medications as treatment.
- Recommend surgery as indicated.
- Suggest the use of incontinence products.

## Agents and Interventions to Avoid

- Recommend limiting daily intake of carbonated drinks, alcohol, tea, and coffee to avoid bladder irritation.

## Evidence-Based Resources for Providers

- American Cancer Society: Bladder and bowel incontinence (<https://bit.ly/3Glc7ku>)

## Evidence-Based Resources for Patients and Family

- National Institute on Aging: Urinary incontinence in older adults ([www.nia.nih.gov/health/urinary-incontinence-older-adults](http://www.nia.nih.gov/health/urinary-incontinence-older-adults))

## REFERENCES

- American Cancer Society. (2020). *Bladder and bowel incontinence*. <https://www.cancer.org/treatment/treatments-and-side-effects/physical-side-effects/stool-or-urine-changes/bladder-incontinence.html>
- National Association for Continence. (n.d.). *About us*. <https://www.nafc.org>

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## KEYWORDS

cancer; symptoms; side effects; long-term side effects; survivorship care

## DIGITAL OBJECT IDENTIFIER

10.1188/21.CJON.S2.27