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URINARY INCONTINENCE IS A CONDITION THAT CAN BE MANAGED WITH MANY POSSIBLE TREATMENTS. DR DURU SHAH URGES WOMEN SUFFERING FROM IT TO SPEAK UP WHEN THEY VISIT THEIR DOCTORS SO THEY CAN IMPROVE THEIR QUALITY OF LIFE



IS YOUR BLADDER LEAKING?

As women grow older, they may be unable to hold their urine, leading to many embarrassing situations. This leads to them using a toilet as soon as one is available so as to avoid letting the bladder get full, which would inevitably be followed by leakage. You may have noticed that the older women in your home always want to make that last visit to the washroom before leaving the house!

This condition is medically known as 'Urinary Incontinence,' and there are several different types:

- **Stress incontinence** – Urine leaks when you sneeze, cough, laugh, bend down, exercise, or do other things that put pressure on the bladder.
- **Urge incontinence** – Also known as Overactive Bladder (OAB), this is when you suddenly have a strong urge to go followed by the

involuntary leaking of urine before you have the chance to reach the closest toilet.

- **Mixed incontinence** – A combination of stress and urge incontinence.
- **Overflow incontinence** – Although more common in men, it is the constant or frequent leaking of urine that occurs due to a bladder that doesn't empty itself completely.
- **Functional incontinence** – This occurs due to physical or mental disabilities like arthritis for instance, which prevent you from reaching the washroom in time

It is essential to determine the difference between these different types of incontinence because the treatment varies for each one. A lot depends on the details that the patient gives their doctor and the clinical examination which follows. There are various tests that your doctor can recommend such as an ultrasound, urodynamic studies, urine culture, etc, which help them decide on the best way forward. Treatments are totally customized based on what every woman needs.

There are many therapies available to solve this distressing problem.

Depending on the type of incontinence, different therapies are advised:

- Pelvic floor exercises to strengthen the related muscles

- Biofeedback to train the bladder
- Electrical stimulation of pelvic muscles
- Vaginal pessaries to support the bladder
- Botox shots into the urinary area to plump up the tissues around the bladder
- Surgery to offer support to the bladder
- Medications to prevent the urge

Despite there being so many treatments for urinary incontinence by way of medications, therapies, and surgeries available, women are still embarrassed to talk to their doctors. Incontinence prevents women from socializing, travelling, or drinking liquids, because they do not know when they will be able to access a clean washroom, especially when travelling by road in India. But, not drinking enough water may lead to a urinary tract infection, which makes the incontinence even worse!

Many products are available to aid the problem of leakage, including liners and pads. So, when you meet your doctor, initiate a conversation about incontinence and they'll be more than prepared to help. Take that first step and you will live without the threat of a leak, the undue stress, and greatly improve your quality of life!

