

### **Physical therapy appointments**

You are required to have a referral from a primary care physician, urologist or gynecologist. You are seen by a physical therapist by referral to provide the best possible medical care through a team approach.

### **Coping and support**

If you're embarrassed about having a bladder control problem, you may try to cope on your own by wearing absorbent pads, carrying extra clothes, and/or frequently staying at home. You may even cut back on drinking liquids to avoid wetting episodes. But there are better ways to manage urinary incontinence and that's why it's important to see your doctor and ask about treatment. Incontinence isn't something you necessarily have to live with and in most cases incontinence can be eliminated or controlled. With incontinence treatment you'll be on your way to regaining an active, confident life, and control of your bladder.

### **For more information**

If you have questions about Henry County Health Center Rehabilitation Service's Urinary Incontinence Program, please call (319) 385-6102

### **Henry County Health Center**

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## **Henry County Health Center Rehabilitation Services**

### **Urinary Incontinence Program**

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## What is urinary incontinence?

Urinary incontinence — the loss of bladder control — is a common and often embarrassing problem. Some people experience occasional minor leaks while others wet their clothes frequently. Urinary incontinence can affect men and women at any age, whether they are sedentary or elite athletes. Urinary incontinence is **not** a normal part of aging.

## Signs of urinary incontinence

If you answer “yes” to at least one of these questions, you may have urinary incontinence:

*I leak when I cough, laugh or sneeze.*

*I urinate more than once during the night.*

*I urinate more than six to eight times a day, or more than once every two hours.*

*I avoid or limit social outings because of the fear of leaking.*

*I get strong urges to urinate and I am unable to make it to the bathroom in time.*

## Types of urinary incontinence

**Stress incontinence.** This is loss of urine when you exert pressure or stress on your bladder by coughing, sneezing, laughing, exercising or lifting something heavy. Stress incontinence occurs when the sphincter muscle of the bladder is weakened. In women, physical changes resulting from pregnancy, childbirth and menopause can cause stress incontinence. In men, removal of the prostate gland can lead to this type of incontinence.

### **Urge incontinence/overactive bladder.**

This is a sudden, intense urge to urinate, followed by an involuntary loss of urine. Your bladder muscle contracts and may give you a warning of only a few seconds to a minute to reach a toilet. With urge incontinence, you may need to urinate often, including throughout the night.

**Mixed incontinence.** If you experience symptoms of more than one type of urinary incontinence, such as stress incontinence and urge incontinence, you have mixed incontinence.



## Physical therapy and incontinence

Physical therapists help you retrain and strengthen pelvic floor muscles. Pelvic floor muscles are a group of muscles that support the bladder and provide compression of the urethra to control urine output. Pelvic floor muscle retraining includes a series of strengthening and/or relaxation exercises involving controlled contraction and release of the muscles at the base of the pelvis used in the treatment of urinary incontinence and pelvic pain.

### **Physical therapy treatment**

At Henry County Health Center, we start by conducting a thorough evaluation and examination. The physical therapist will ask you questions about your health history, including illnesses, surgeries and medications. The therapist will ask you specific questions regarding urination; including frequency, amount, leakage and activities associated with or interrupted by urination. We will examine your strength of your trunk, extremities and pelvic floor muscles. We may perform an internal pelvic muscle floor examination to determine strength, tone, sensation, tenderness, scarring and any other abnormalities of the pelvic muscles. From our first evaluation session we will determine your specific needs then build a customized exercise program.