



## **HARTMANN DIRECT HEALTH FACTSHEET 5 ABOUT STRESS URINARY INCONTINENCE IN MEN**

### **In men, the normal bladder and how it works**

The bladder is situated in the lower abdomen, to the front of the pelvis. The back wall of the bladder rests on the lower bowel. Urine is passed from the bladder to the end of the penis through the urethra (you may call this the bladder tube or water pipe). The urethra is about 20cm (8") in length. Where the urethra leaves the bladder (the bladder neck), a strong muscle surrounds it to stop any leakage. This is the muscle, which you have to relax when you pass urine.

Also around the urethra just below the bladder neck, is the prostate gland. This is rather like a thick collar, open at the front. If the prostate gland enlarges, which it does with age, it may tighten around the urethra, making the passing of urine more difficult.

The bladder and bowel are kept in place by muscles, called the pelvic floor muscles.

Your bladder is like a balloon. When it is full it is like a blown-up balloon, the walls are thin and it is happy to hold the contents until you are ready to let go. When it is empty, it is like a balloon you have blown up and then gently let the air escape. Like nipping your fingers around the balloon as you blow it up, the muscle at the bladder neck, helps to prevent leakage, but only if it is strong and well supported, and receiving the correct messages from the brain.

If this muscle is weak, sometimes after injury, illness or surgery on the prostate gland, it can let you down if you cough or sneeze or exert yourself in any way, allowing a small volume of urine to leak. This is called stress urinary incontinence, a bit like momentarily lessening your grip on a balloon full of air and then tightening your grip once more...too late to stop an embarrassing leak.

### **Stress urinary incontinence**

Stress urinary incontinence is caused by weakness of the pelvic floor muscles around the bladder outlet resulting in urine leakage at the same time as you raise the pressure in the abdomen. To raise the pressure in the abdomen, all you need to do is, for example to cough, sneeze, laugh, lift a bag or weight, jog or even walk downhill. The leak is often described as a 'squirt' of urine and may be worse later in the day when the muscles become tired. The leak is usually slight, but moderate or severe leakage can occur.

This particular bladder problem is much more common in women than men.

### **May be made worse by...**

Factors, which contribute to the risk of stress urinary incontinence in men, include trauma, some illnesses, surgery to the prostate gland, chronic cough and constipation. For further information, please see the following leaflets:

### **About incontinence**

### **Pelvic floor muscle exercises for men**

**IMPORTANT:  
IF YOU SEE BLOOD IN THE URINE, REPORT THIS TO YOUR DOCTOR.**