



Physiotherapy & Incontinence

Incontinence—difficulty with bladder control—dramatically affects many aspects of life for many Canadians.

This treatable condition limits life choices and prevents sufferers from taking on new challenges.

Whatever the cause, with physiotherapy treatment incontinence can often be improved, resolved or managed successfully.

Did You Know?

The Canadian Continence Foundation estimates that 1.5 million Canadians are incontinent.

Contrary to myth, adult incontinence occurs in young and old and is not a normal process of aging.

Incontinence affects many aspects of life:

- work
- social activities
- recreation
- travel
- sex

Physiotherapy offers an effective treatment for the 30 – 55 % of women and 15% of men who are incontinent.

Physiotherapy: Effective Treatment for Urinary Incontinence

Stress incontinence is the leakage of urine during activities such as coughing, sneezing, lifting or exercising. It is often caused by pelvic floor muscles that are weak or used incorrectly.

Childbirth, lifestyle, hormone changes, certain medical conditions and surgery are some events that can bring about these changes in the pelvic floor. Regardless of the cause, **stress incontinence can be treated or managed successfully by physiotherapists.**

Urge incontinence is the leakage of urine as soon as one feels the need to go to the bathroom. It can be accompanied by the need to pass urine frequently, which may involve repeated trips to the toilet even during the night.

Urge incontinence can be caused by bladder infections or constipation, poor bladder or bowel habits or other lifestyle factors. It can also be a side effect of stroke, spinal cord injury, Multiple Sclerosis or Parkinson's disease. Regardless of the cause, **urge incontinence can be treated or managed successfully by physiotherapists.**

Some people experience both stress and urge incontinence at different times or in different circumstances.

Physiotherapy Offers an Effective Treatment Option

Physiotherapy is a non-invasive treatment for incontinence. Alternate medical interventions are medication and surgery.

Physiotherapy treatment focuses on rehabilitation of pelvic floor muscle control, strength, endurance, and the ability to coordinate these aspects into everyday activities.

Treatment is tailored to the individual patient. Treatment varies according to the type of incontinence and the individual's unique needs.

Physiotherapy interventions may include biofeedback; electrotherapy; instruction on behavioural changes regarding diet, bowel and bladder habits; bladder retraining techniques; the use of pessaries (internal assistive devices).

Physiotherapists:
The Body Specialists



Physiotherapy: It'll Move You

PTs: Pelvic Floor Rehabilitation

Successful pelvic floor rehabilitation is central to conservative treatment of incontinence. Research has demonstrated that with only verbal and/or written instruction, 40-50 % of women are unable to correctly perform a pelvic floor muscle contraction (Kegel exercise), even when they think they have mastered the skill. Not only is correct pelvic floor function important in maintaining continence, it is also required for pelvic organ support, to maintain correct posture and to perform pain free low back movements.

PTs: Experts in Assessment

The pelvic floor must also work in coordination with the diaphragm when breathing. If pelvic floor function is not optimum in one or more of these aspects, continence will be compromised. As successful pelvic floor rehabilitation in the treatment of incontinence is critical, it is important to have pelvic floor muscle function assessed by a qualified health care practitioner knowledgeable in bladder control, pelvic floor muscle function and muscle rehabilitation. Physiotherapists are experts in this field.

PTs: Knowledge & Expertise

University educated physiotherapists with postgraduate continence training understand the anatomy and physiology of the urogenital and lower gastrointestinal systems, including micturition and defecation mechanisms. Working from an evidence based perspective, physiotherapists are able to combine their knowledge of bowel and bladder control mechanisms with their expertise in muscle physiology, strength, endurance and exercise progression.

PTs: Integrating Treatment & Daily Living

Physiotherapists are the experts at integrating treatment into daily living activities. Treatment is provided in a manner that enhances the health and function of the pelvic floor in all of its roles, thereby maximizing the outcome for the person struggling with incontinence and improving their quality of life.

For further information please contact the Physiotherapy Association of BC, info@bcphysio.org, or see our website www.bcphysio.org under *Find a Physio*. Search under Urology/Gynecology.