

Surgical Treatment of Urinary Incontinence in Women

When Is Surgery the Treatment of Choice?

Not all types of urinary incontinence can be treated with surgery. Usually, surgery is used to treat stress incontinence. This is when the pelvic muscles have become weakened and do not provide enough support of the bladder (your bladder has "dropped"). This leads to leaking of urine when you cough, sneeze, laugh, or do other similar activities.

How Is Surgery Diagnosed?

Before deciding whether surgery is the right treatment for you, your doctor will use several diagnostic tools, such as the following.

History and Physical Examination. The doctor will ask you about your incontinence symptoms and your medical history and then do a complete physical examination including a pelvic exam.

Bladder Diary. You will be asked to keep a record for several days of the amount of fluid you drink, when you use the toilet, and when you leak urine.

Urine Tests. You will be asked for a urine sample to test to see if you have an infection and to do other tests.

Other Testing. You may have to have other tests so that the doctor can get a clearer picture of your bladder problems. These tests will be explained to you in detail before they are scheduled.

What Can You Expect?

If you and your doctor determine that surgery is the best option for treating your urinary incontinence, you will be checked into a hospital for the procedure. On average, you can expect a 3-day

***What Can
You Expect?
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hospital stay. During your hospital stay, the doctors will look for signs of infection, make sure that you are eating and drinking enough, and make sure that you are able to get around.

You will have a catheter in your bladder to keep it empty. On the third day, the catheter will be taken out and you will be checked to make sure that you are able to empty your bladder. If you are not able to empty your bladder, the catheter will be put back in again for 1 week. You will be able to go home with the catheter, and you will be instructed on how to take care of it at home.

When you return home from the hospital, there are a few precautionary measures you will need to take in order to avoid complications. These include:

- No heavy lifting (nothing heavier than a phone book) for 4 weeks, then nothing heavier than 5 pounds for 3 months
- No excessive stair climbing for 4 weeks
- Pelvic rest (no douching or intercourse) for 4 weeks
- No driving for 2 to 4 weeks