

You may hear some of these terms mentioned by your doctor. Most women don't like to question their doctor, and leave the session no wiser than when they first made the appointment. This glossary is aimed to simplify some of the medical terms you may hear.

Glossary of terms

Anterior Repair - a gynaecologic surgical procedure designed to treat a cystocele (a bulge of the bladder into the vagina).

Anticholinergic - a class of drugs which help to control the urgent need to pee by discouraging the tightening of the bladder muscles before the bladder is full. Some examples: "Pro-Banthine" (Propantheline Bromide) and "Detrol" (Tolterodine).

Bladder - a hollow muscular organ, which stores urine inside the body.

Bladder Drill - training the bladder to hold urine for longer periods of time.

Bladder Diary - a record of how many times a woman voids (pees, urinates) as well as how much urine she voids and the amount and type of liquid she drinks. Also called a "Urolog".

Bladder Infections - inflammation of the bladder caused by a heavy growth of bacteria in the bladder. Symptoms of a bladder infection may include frequency of voiding, pain on voiding and discolouration of urine but a bladder infection without these symptoms is possible, especially in the older woman.

Burch Procedure - Surgical procedures used to treat stress incontinence.

Combined Anti-cholinergics & Smooth Muscle Relaxants - These medications relax smooth muscle and reduce excessive bladder tightening. They reduce the feeling of urgency. Example: "Ditropan" (Oxybutynin Chloride).

Cystitis - An inflammation of the bladder. Usually caused by a urinary bladder infection.

Cystocele - a bulge of the bladder into the vagina caused by loss of support for the bladder in the pelvis.

Cystoscopy - a process in which a physician inserts a scope into the urethra and up into the bladder to examine the inside of the bladder.

Detrusor muscle - The smooth muscle in the wall of the bladder that contracts the bladder and expels the urine.

Dysuria - burning discomfort experienced as the urine passes through the urethra from the bladder to the outside of the body.

Estrogen - a hormone that regulates the female menstrual cycle. It is produced in a woman's body in the ovaries. The amount of estrogen produced by the ovaries decreases during menopause.

Frequency - urinating or voiding more than 5 to 7 times per day without an increase in the volume of liquid consumed.

Hematuria - blood in the urine which may be microscopic (only seen under a microscope) or gross (visible to the naked eye).

Incontinence (Urinary) - involuntary bladder leakage (loss of urine).

Kegel's Exercises - exercises to strengthen the pelvic support muscles and the muscles that squeeze to close the urethra and hold urine in the bladder until it is an appropriate time to void.

Kidneys - the organs, which remove excess water and impurities from the blood and produce urine.

Mixed Incontinence (Urinary) - bladder symptoms which include leaking with physical activity such as coughing, sneezing, laughing as well as leaking while rushing to the washroom to void.

Needle Suspension - a surgical technique to stop the leakage of urine, which uses long sutures passed down behind the pubic bone to support the urethra.

Nocturia - getting up too frequently at night to empty the bladder (more than 3 times per night).

Ovaries - female glands in a woman's pelvic area which produce eggs and the hormones (oestrogen and progesterone).

Overflow Incontinence (Urinary) - continuous bladder leaking caused by an inability to empty the bladder normally.

Pad Test - a test in which the woman wears a pad while doing some mild physical activities. The pad is weighed after testing to determine how much urine leaks from the bladder with the physical activity.

Pessary - a device which is placed in the vagina to support prolapsing (sagging) organs (bladder, uterus) and/or to stop bladder leakage.

Pelvic Floor (Muscles) - muscles which form a hammock shape in the bottom of the pelvis and support the pelvic organs.

Pelvic Floor Electrical Stimulation - a treatment for urinary incontinence that involves the stimulation of either the pelvic floor muscles (stress incontinence) or the nerves that supply the bladder (urgency incontinence) with a mild electrical impulse.

Pelvic Organs - pelvic organs include the bladder, uterus, ovaries, vagina and rectum.

Pelvic Prolapse - a condition in which a pelvic organ has lost its normal support and is falling into or out of the vagina.

Progesterone - a female hormone secreted by the ovaries.

Prolapse - The protrusion, dropping or slipping down of a body part from its normal position into the vagina. Uterus (uterine prolapse) - rectum (rectocele) - bladder (cystocele)

Prompted Voiding - voiding in response to a cue or prompt to void. Voiding times may vary.

Q-Tip Test - a lubricated cotton-tip swab is inserted into the urethra by your doctor to determine how well the urethra is supported in the pelvis.

Rectocele - a bulge of the rectum into the vagina caused by loss of support of the rectum.

Scheduled Voiding - voiding (peeing) at fixed time intervals.

Sling Procedures - surgical procedures for stress incontinence which use either artificial materials or tissue from a woman's own body to form a sling to support the urethra and bladder neck.

Smooth Muscle Relaxants - These medications cause the smooth muscle in the bladder to relax. They discourage the bladder muscles from tightening before the bladder is full and reduce the feeling of urgency. Example: "Urispas"(Flavoxate).

Stress Incontinence (Urinary) - leaking of urine from the bladder caused by failure of the urethra (the "valve" which closes the bladder and holds urine in).

TOT (Trans-obturator tape) - a minimally invasive surgical procedure for treating stress incontinence. (Not as successful as the TVT up to date)

TVT (Tension Free Vaginal Tape) Procedure - a minimally invasive surgical procedure for treating stress incontinence.

Unstable Bladder - a woman with an unstable bladder is not able to stop the bladder from emptying spontaneously. It may be caused by irritation to the bladder or because of abnormalities in the nerve control of the bladder. In 85% of cases no abnormality is found, the more common cause is irritation to the bladder (for example, irritation from a urinary tract infection or too much caffeine).

Ureters - the hollow tubes which carry urine from the kidneys to the bladder.

Urethra - the hollow tube, which carries urine from the bladder out of the body.

Urge Incontinence (Urinary) - loss of urine from the bladder that is associated with a very strong desire to urinate and an inability to delay long enough to get to the washroom in time.

Urgency - a very strong urge to pee which makes you hurry to get to the washroom.

Urine - "pee" - made up of excess water and waste products removed from the bloodstream by the kidneys. Urine is carried from the kidneys to the bladder where it is stored until the bladder is full. The urine is carried out of the body through a hollow tube (the urethra).

Urinalysis - a laboratory test in which the urine is examined for any abnormalities.

Urinary Incontinence - involuntary bladder leakage (loss of urine) at a time and/or place that is not appropriate.

Urinary Tract - consists of the kidneys, ureters, bladder and urethra.

Urodynamics - an advanced test of how the bladder works. It is done by a healthcare professional. Small catheters with delicate sensors are placed in the bladder and vagina.

Urolog - also called a "Bladder Diary". It is a record of how many times a woman voids (pees, urinates) as well as how much urine she voids and the amount and type of liquid she drinks.

Uterus - the organ which is located in the pelvis at the top of the vagina. It is where a pregnancy is carried.

Void, Voiding - to urinate, to pee, to "pass water".