

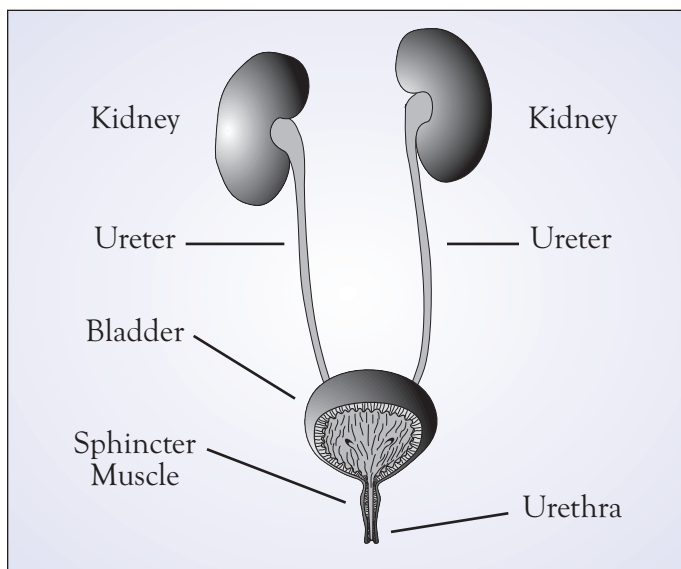
# A Layman's Guide to Incontinence

## Understanding Bladder Control Loss

Incontinence is the medical term for the inability to control urination. Urine is produced by the kidneys and stored in the bladder. The sphincter muscles near the bladder outlet prevent urine from leaking out until the brain indicates that it is time to urinate. When control of this process is lost, the resulting condition is called urinary incontinence. More than 14 million Americans are incontinent.

### The Urinary Process

The urinary process begins with the kidneys, which are responsible for filtering waste and water from your blood. The waste and water combine to create urine. The urine must then travel through the ureters to the bladder where it is stored until urination.



The bladder is a complex organ consisting of muscle tissues that enable it to hold urine in place as necessary and to push urine through the urethra and out of the body during urination.

The human nervous system also plays a role in the urinary process. As the bladder fills with urine, nerves inside the bladder send a message to the brain alerting you to the coming need to urinate. Once the bladder nerves send a message of “full” to the brain, the brain in turn sends a message to the sphincter muscle that it is time to release the urine from the bladder into the urethra and out of the body.

Incontinence, or loss of bladder control, is the result of a dysfunction somewhere in the urinary process. The dysfunction may be related to the nervous system message relay between the brain, muscles and nerves involved in urination, or it may be the result of other factors listed below. It is important to consult your physician for proper diagnosis of the cause of any dysfunctions of the urinary process.

### Causes of Incontinence

Loss of bladder control can occur for a number of reasons, not all of which are permanent. Some of these reasons may be:

- Infections or inflammations of the bladder, the prostate gland or the surrounding muscles.
- Nervous system disorders such as spina bifida, diabetes or strokes.
- Neuromuscular diseases such as multiple sclerosis and cerebral palsy.
- Weakened muscle control due to age or such natural occurrences as childbirth.
- Damage caused by spinal injuries.
- Side effects from surgery.

### Types of Incontinence

#### Stress Incontinence

This is the leakage of urine as a result of sudden stress on the bladder. Often it is caused by coughing, laughing, exercising or lifting a heavy object.

#### Urge Incontinence

This is a sudden urge to urinate that is so strong it can't be held in. This type generally occurs if you can't reach the bathroom in time after the urge or as a result of decreased muscle control.

#### Overflow Incontinence

This is involuntary urination because the bladder has filled beyond capacity. Pressure on the bladder may build up and the muscles surrounding the bladder are unable to hold in the urine.

(continued on page 2)

## Types of Incontinence (continued)

It is also possible that you may experience symptoms of more than one type of incontinence mentioned above. A complete urodynamic exam by a doctor can determine the type of incontinence and the appropriate method of treatment.

## Coping with Incontinence

Unfortunately, incontinence often places a stigma on people that is sometimes much worse than the physical condition. People would rather stay home than risk the embarrassment of having an accident in front of friends and family. This isolation can lead to depression and a complete withdrawal from social activities.

Incontinence, however, should not be looked upon as a disgraceful condition. It is a physical disorder that can be treated and frequently cured with the right medical help. If you are incontinent, you should see your doctor about specific treatments that might benefit you. Treatment options include bladder training, muscle conditioning and exercise, surgery and medications.

The many varieties of absorbent products offered by HDIS can help you manage your incontinence and live a full, active life. The following list should help you identify which type of products will best work for you. *Remember, incontinence is a medical condition. It is very important that all treatment begin under the supervision of your doctor.*

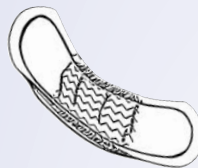


**Home Delivery Incontinent Supplies Co., Inc.**  
9385 Dielman Ind. Drive  
Olivette, MO 63132

Toll-Free  
Product Advice and Order Line:  
**1-800-367-8360**  
[www.hdismedicaid.com](http://www.hdismedicaid.com)

*Dr. Carol Grench, who regularly writes for our "HDIS Family Letter," has contributed information for this educational brochure.*

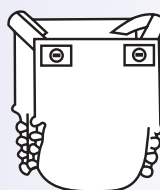
## Products Available by Level of Protection



### Pads or Guards

*Light to Moderate Protection*

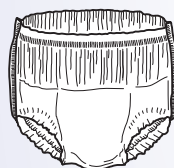
They are used in your own underwear and stay in place with an adhesive strip. These are products designed specifically for men or women.



### Undergarments

*Moderate to Heavy Protection*

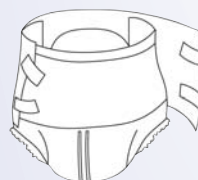
Belted style fastens around the waist with straps and buttons. The beltless style is worn inside your own underwear and stays in place with an adhesive strip.



### Protective Underwear

*Moderate to Heavy Protection*

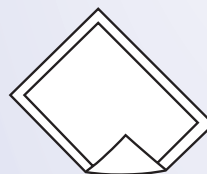
Its pull-on, pull-off design imitates typical underwear.



### Briefs

*Heavy Protection*

Full wrap around style fastens with tape tabs.



### Underpads

*Additional Protection*

Are placed on beds and chairs to help provide extra protection against leaks.