



incontinence

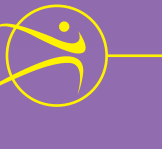
Over 250,000 people in Ireland suffer from poor bladder control. Inadequate control of the bladder and bowel can occur at any age in both females (one in four) and males (one in ten). It is estimated that one in three females at fifty-five years of age suffers from symptoms of stress incontinence.

The development of the Chartered Physiotherapist's role in the treatment of urinary and bowel incontinence offers an important option in the treatment of this distressing problem. Research has shown that physiotherapy helps to strengthen pelvic floor contractions and improve continence.

With poor bladder control you can experience leaking of urine, pain, frequency and an urgent need to go to the toilet without adequate warning. You may need to wear pads, get up in the middle of the night, change your clothes frequently, feel constantly uncomfortable, lose self-confidence and it may interfere in the activities of your daily life.

Poor bladder and bowel control can be caused by:

- Injury – the tissues of the pelvic floor which support the bladder and back passage may be injured due to surgery, pregnancy or childbirth. Some women may experience their first symptoms around the time of the menopause. Men may also experience problems often associated with an enlarged prostate gland or following the surgery to treat this condition.
- Poor muscle tone – weakness of the pelvic floor muscles. This is known as stress incontinence.
- Over-activity of the nerve supply – of the pelvic floor muscle or bladder muscles may result in urge incontinence or overflow incontinence.



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education

- Infection – urinary tract infection, cystitis.
- Neurological disease – multiple sclerosis, stroke, Parkinson's disease.
- Medical conditions – diabetes.

Your visit to the Chartered Physiotherapist will include a detailed assessment to identify your problem and the underlying cause. This is achieved by analysing your symptoms, assessing the pelvic floor muscles and identifying any lifestyle or eating and drinking habits that may contribute to the problem.

Specific treatments for incontinence may include some of the following:

- Supervised strengthening exercises for the pelvic floor muscles. This may include the use of weighted vaginal cones.
- Biofeedback for pelvic floor re-education.
- Behavioural modification programmes for training the bladder muscle.
- Electrical muscle stimulation – internal or external electrodes may be used and you may be given a home unit.
- Educational/lifestyle adjustments – home-based programmes with continual assessments.



exercise



return to normal activities

Your Chartered Physiotherapist will monitor your symptoms at each visit and will progress your treatment programme accordingly. If appropriate, your physiotherapist will liaise with your doctor, hospital consultant or health care professional. You will be advised on a long-term programme to prevent recurrence.

A Chartered Physiotherapist is a university graduate with hospital-based training who has a comprehensive knowledge of how the body works and specialist training in the diagnosis and treatment of injuries.

