

Despite What Your Mother Told You – Incontinence Is Not Normal & Treatment Is Available

Did you know that physical therapy is a treatment option for men and women who suffer from the embarrassing effects of incontinence? Television ads may try to convince you that this is a “normal” part of aging in order to sell more protection products – but the fact of the matter is that incontinence is NOT a “normal” part of aging – and treatment is available.

The NCH Briggs Outpatient Rehabilitation Center, located 399 9th Street N, Suite 102 in Naples, offers just such a therapeutic treatment program – called Pelvic Floor Therapy (PFT) – that can help those who suffer with stress or urge incontinence.

Elizabeth Maconachy, DPT, board-certified women’s health clinical specialist, one of only two in Southwest Florida, heads up the program.

According to Maconachy, no urine leakage is considered normal. Incontinence is defined as unwanted leakage of urine, regardless of volume. More common in women – or in men after prostate surgery – incontinence can afflict people of any age; children with bed-wetting, teens, females in pregnancy or after menopause, to those in their 70s and beyond.

Studies show that 50 to 65 percent of women experience incontinence, but do not report it to their physicians because they have been led to believe that it is a normal part of aging, or that it is a non-medical issue, or they are embarrassed.

With a normal, healthy bladder, bathroom visits average five to eight times daily, or every two to five hours. But seeking a bathroom every place you go or when pulling into a driveway, then putting the key in the door and needing to run to the bathroom are red flags.

Stress incontinence places stress on the pelvic floor and the bladder, causing a force against the bladder that leaks urine while doing stressful activities like coughing, sneezing, laughing, jumping or even getting out of a chair.

Urge incontinence is when you get a sudden urge to urinate and you can’t hold it while trying to get to a restroom. Not considered normal, it can be improved through Pelvic Floor Therapy.

“With PFT, we first do a musculoskeletal assessment of the whole body and the pelvic floor,” explains Maconachy. “We then custom-tailor a plan of treatment to the individual’s unique needs, using a

variety of strategies.”

Maconachy says that pelvic floor muscles are just like any other muscles – they need to be strong and need to learn to relax. They can also be strained. “Pelvic muscles are inside,” she explains, “and we need to learn how to isolate those muscles.”

PFT is usually performed in 10 to 15 treatment sessions, using therapeutic exercise, electrical stimulation, biofeedback, pelvic floor exercises and a discussion of diet and fluids.

In the presence of bladder symptoms, an evaluation by a gynecologist or urologist is needed, and if other conditions are ruled out, then a referral to physical therapy is appropriate.

Symptoms of incontinence include losing urine when:

- Sneezing
- Coughing
- Laughing
- Jumping
- During heavy physical activity
- Getting out of a chair
- Needing to go to the bathroom urgently



Elizabeth
Maconachy

For more information or make an appointment call NCH Briggs Outpatient Rehabilitation Center at (239) 624-1600.