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PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

# Neurogenic Bladder

This information explains the causes, diagnosis, and treatment of neurogenic bladder.

## What is neurogenic bladder?

Neurogenic bladder is when your bladder isn't working the way it should. These problems can affect the nerves of your bladder and your ability to urinate (pee). People with neurogenic bladder:

- Are not able to hold in their urine (pee).
- Have to urinate many times during the day or night.
- Feel they need to urinate right away, but then aren't able to.
- Have incontinence (leaking urine) because they did not feel the need to urinate.
- May have urinary retention (not able to fully empty out the bladder). This can lead to urinary tract infections (UTIs).

## Causes of neurogenic bladder

Neurogenic bladder can be caused by:

- Chemotherapy.
- Radiation therapy in your pelvic area. This is the area between your legs and abdomen (belly).
- Tumors of your spinal cord, brain, or pelvic area.
- Surgery in your pelvic area.
- Brain, spinal cord, or nerve problems, such as spinal cord injury.

# How to diagnose neurogenic bladder

To find out if you have neurogenic bladder, your healthcare provider will:

- Talk with you about your medical history.
- Ask you about your urinary history.
- Give you a physical exam.
- Do an ultrasound of your bladder. Ultrasound uses sound waves to make images of your bladder. Your healthcare provider will ask you to urinate before the procedure. Then, they will do an ultrasound to see how much urine stayed in your bladder. No radiation is involved in this test.

Your healthcare provider may ask you to keep track of when and how much you urinate for 3 days. They will give you more information if you need to do this.

Your doctor may also order other tests, such as:

- **Ultrasound of your kidneys.**
- **Urine analysis or urine culture.** These tests check your urine to find germs, such as bacteria, that can cause infection.
- **Urodynamic (YOOR-oh- dy-NA-mik) evaluation.** This procedure tests how well your bladder is working. Read *Urodynamic Evaluation* ([www.mskcc.org/cancer-care/patient-education/urodynamic-evaluation](http://www.mskcc.org/cancer-care/patient-education/urodynamic-evaluation)) for more information.
- **Cystoscopy (sis-TOS-koh-pee).** During this procedure, your doctor will use a scope to check for problems in your urinary tract. A scope is a hollow tube with a tiny light on the end. They will use the scope to look at your bladder and urethra. Your urethra is a tube that carries urine out of your body. Read *About Your Cystoscopy in the Operating Room* ([www.mskcc.org/pe/about\\_cystoscopy](http://www.mskcc.org/pe/about_cystoscopy)) for more information.

# How to manage neurogenic bladder

The goal of treatment for neurogenic bladder is to control and manage your symptoms. Your treatment plan will be based on your diagnosis. You and your doctor will discuss which treatment is right for you.

Possible treatments include:

- **Double voiding.** Sit on the toilet and urinate as you normally do. When you're finished urinating, stand up, sit down again, and try to urinate again. This may help empty your bladder.
- **Crede technique.** Make a fist with one hand. Put it on your lower abdomen right below your belly button as you urinate. Put your other hand over your fist and apply pressure. This will help empty your bladder.
- **Limit how much you drink in the evening.** Drink more liquids during the day and less liquids in the evening. This can help prevent accidental leakage at night.
- **Crede technique.** Make a fist with one hand. Put it on your lower abdomen right below your belly button as you urinate. Put your other hand over your fist and apply pressure. This will help empty out your bladder completely.
- **Limit how much you drink in the evening.** Drinking more liquids during the day and less liquids in the evening can help prevent accidental leakage at night.
- **Medication to relax your bladder.**
- **Pelvic floor therapy.** This is a type of physical therapy to strengthen your pelvic floor muscles. You'll start these exercises at physical therapy twice a week for 6 weeks. After 6 weeks, keep doing the exercises home.

# When to call your healthcare provider

A diagnosis of a neurogenic bladder may seem overwhelming, but your care team is here to help. If you have any questions or concerns, call your healthcare provider.

If you have questions or concerns, contact your healthcare provider. A member of your care team will answer Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Outside those hours, you can leave a message or talk with another MSK provider. There is always a doctor or nurse on call. If you're not sure how to reach your healthcare provider, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit [www.mskcc.org/pe](http://www.mskcc.org/pe) to search our virtual library.

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