

Bladder and Bowel Changes After a Stroke

General Information

Bladder and bowel changes are common after a stroke. Your brain may lose its power and control over your bladder and bowels.

As a result, you may:

- feel like you need to urinate when you don't
- get the urge to go and can't make it to the bathroom on time
- have leaking or need to wear a pad.

Constipation can be an issue due to lack of mobility or mixed signals from your brain.

These issues usually get better over time but can be treated if they don't improve.

What You Can Do to Improve

- Talk with your health care provider and health care team for ideas.
- Set up a bathroom schedule. For instance, go every 2 hours.
- Set up regular meal times.
- Keep your skin clean and dry.
- Exercise each day. Moving help stimulates your bowels and helps prevent constipation. Walking can help strengthen pelvic floor muscles.
- Talk with your health care provider about a bladder retraining program.

- Track signs and symptoms of a urinary tract infection. Call your health care provider if you have these symptoms:
 - feeling very tired (fatigue)
 - having a fever
 - needing to urinate often
 - having cloudy urine
 - having foul-smelling urine.

Equipment

- Get equipment to make using the toilet easier such as a raised toilet seat, urinal or a commode. (There are also special devices for wiping or dressing if needed.)
- Use a pad or liner to absorb leaking.
- Make your home bathroom safe and easily accessible. You can have a physical therapist or occupational therapist come to your home to assess your bathroom.

When to Call Your Health Care Provider

Call you health care provider if:

- your symptoms of urgency continue
- you have pain when you urinate
- you have questions or concerns.