



THE WOMAN'S CENTER FOR ADVANCED PELVIC SURGERY

Specializing in Pelvic Floor Disorders, Urinary Incontinence & Pelvic Organ Prolapse

Leakage usually doesn't persist

By Dr. Ryan Stratford

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I leaked urine during my last pregnancy. Will I have this problem for the rest of my life?

Most urine leakage during pregnancy is associated with pregnancy and resolves after pregnancy. However, sometimes it does not.

The involuntary leakage is classified as stress incontinence. Stress incontinence is involuntary leakage of urine due to coughing, sneezing, or laughing. The cause of stress incontinence is typically a lack of support to the urethra (the tube from the bladder to the outside world).

A common analogy to understanding stress incontinence is comparing the urethra to a gardening hose. If you wanted to kink off the hose and stepped on it while on wet grass, the hose would sink into the grass and not kink off. Whereas if the hose were on cement and you stepped on it, it would easily kink off. When the supporting tissue below and around the urethra is compromised leaking occurs when pressure is exerted on the bladder as occurs with cough, sneeze, exercise, or laugh.

During pregnancy hormones are released that affect the supporting structures to the bladder and urethra, making them softer and more moveable. Because of these hormones, stress incontinence is more common during pregnancy. Once the body has cleared these hormones, most women no longer have stress incontinence. However, childbirth is another cause of stress incontinence and may cause injury to the supporting tissue of the bladder and urethra, exacerbating the underlying problem caused by hormones.

If the stress incontinence has not resolved by six months after delivery then it is unlikely to improve with more time and may be a lasting condition. Seeing a physician who specializes in urinary incontinence such as a urogynecologist may be helpful. You can immediately begin treating the stress incontinence at home by doing daily Kegel exercises. In the end, there are many good treatments for stress incontinence. It is not a "part of pregnancy" to continue having urine leakage months after delivery and you can receive treatment.

Contact information:

Ryan R. Stratford, MD

The Woman's Center for Advanced Pelvic Surgery

1432 S. Dobson Road, Suite 509

Mesa, AZ 85202

Office phone 480-834-5111.

Office hours: daily from 8am to 5pm.

(On the campus of Banner Desert Medical Center)