



Atlanta Magazine Questions
Peachtree Gynecology

1. How do I know if my bladder leakage is just a part of aging or a real medical problem? What are the best treatments for bladder problems?

One out of six American women over the age of 45 suffers from urinary incontinence, or “bladder leakage”. Although bladder leakage increases with age, it should not be considered an inevitable part of growing older. The International Continence Society defines urinary incontinence as “any involuntary bladder leakage that is a social or hygienic problem.” The 2 major types of bladder leakage are (1) urge incontinence, which is leakage while rushing to the bathroom or without warning; and (2) stress incontinence, which is leakage with coughing, laughing, sneezing, and physical activity.

Urge incontinence is due to an overactive or spastic bladder muscle that contracts to empty the bladder without warning. This type of incontinence is treated with medications to relax the bladder. Stress leakage is due to a weakness in the bladder neck opening or sphincter, and can be helped by exercises that strengthen the pelvic muscles or a variety of surgical procedures. The good news is that the technology and treatment options have improved dramatically in recent years, and most are now accomplished with office or outpatient procedures with minimal, if any, down time.

The most important recommendation is for women to educate themselves, know their options, and find a physician who will listen to them to find the right treatment plan for them. They should not “suffer in silence” and be embarrassed to discuss the problem with their healthcare provider. More information can be found on the National Association for Continence (www.NAFC.com) and the American Urogynecological Society (www.augs.org) web sites.