

GP Fact Sheet: Urge Incontinence

Practice guidelines

- Risk factor studies show urinary incontinence increases fall risk by **1.75-fold** in recurrent fallers (meta-analysis) (Deandrea et. al. 2010).
- Risk factor studies show urge incontinence increases fall risk by **two-fold** (meta-analysis) (Chiarelli et. al. 2009).



Key points

- Up to 41% of older men and 31% of older women may be affected by symptoms of overactive bladder such as urinary urgency and nocturia.
- The cognitive demands of performing multiple tasks simultaneously such as walking, concentrating on controlling the urge and negotiating household hazards, while getting to the toilet quickly may have a detrimental effect on maintaining balance.
- The frequency of night time journeys to the toilet often combined with poor lighting, the effects of disturbed sleep, and rapid changes in body position from lying to standing and walking, can significantly increase the odds of falling.
- While there is limited evidence-based intervention for fall prevention, management should include investigation into underlying cause(s) to address incontinence issues with appropriate interventions, in addition to home safety and environmental considerations.
- There may be continence nurse specialists in your area who can assist with management of urge incontinence.

Referral and patient resources

- Find a continence service provider: [Continence Foundation of Australia directory](#) (or call the National Continence Helpline on 1800 330 066).
- Patient education leaflet: [Falls Prevention – Urge Incontinence](#) (click [here](#) for other patient flyers on the NSW Clinical Excellence Commission website).
- For more information on incontinence: [Continence Foundation of Australia](#).

References

Chiarelli, P. E., Mackenzie, L. A., & Osmotherly, P. G. (2009). [Urinary incontinence is associated with an increase in falls: a systematic review](#). Australian Physiotherapy Association, 55, 89-95.