



WOMEN'S HEALTH

Breaking The Silence; Shining Light On A Common Yet Underreported Women's Health Condition

(NAPSA)—It's a medical condition that is incredibly common, yet seldom talked about. An estimated 15 million adult women in the U.S. struggle with it and two out of three women don't bring the subject up with their doctors. What is the condition? Stress urinary incontinence or SUI.

The name stress urinary incontinence refers to physical stress; when abdominal pressure increases during activities such as sneezing, coughing, laughing, lifting or exercising, resulting in an involuntary loss of urine.

Embarrassment causes many women to keep silent about their condition and this silence allows misconceptions to flourish. Many women believe SUI is a normal part of aging or inevitable after childbirth but that is not the case, according to Victor Nitti, MD, associate professor and director/vice chairman of the Urology department at New York University. "SUI is not a normal part of aging. It affects women of all ages and most women don't know that it's treatable. We need to dispel these myths and encourage more women to talk to their health care professionals."

It is also important to note that SUI is different from urge incontinence (UII), another prevalent form of incontinence. UII involves the loss of urine associated with or immediately preceding a strong urge to void. Though it is possible to have both, it's always good to remember that SUI episodes, unlike UII episodes, occur during triggering events (e.g., sneezing, coughing, laughing) or physical activities (e.g., lifting, exercising).

"For women who have SUI, imagine that the bladder is a balloon, and you're holding the balloon together toward the end of the stem. Your fingers represent what is called the urethral sphincter or the muscle that holds urine in the bladder," said Dr. Nitti. "In



many women, the urethral sphincter will weaken due to obesity, childbirth, chronic coughing or constipation. When the sphincter is weakened, it is like the fingers are loose on the balloon and allow air to escape. So, ultimately when a woman sneezes, coughs, laughs, lifts or exercises, the urethral sphincter cannot hold the contents in the bladder and the result is an accidental leakage."

When asked what advice he would give to women with SUI, Dr. Nitti reiterated the importance of knowing the facts: "Taking the first step and bringing up the subject of incontinence to a health care professional or even a loved one, always seems to be the hardest part of the process for many of my patients. That first step can actually be the key to improving a patient's quality of life."

For more information on stress urinary incontinence, visit: www.sui.com.

SUI "Triggers"

- Sneezing
- Coughing
- Laughing
- Lifting
- Exercising

