

Beat the bladder blues!



IT'S COMMON IN WOMEN, BUT IT'S NOT THE SORT OF THING WE SHOUT ABOUT. DR ELLIE CANNON EXPLAINS WHY WE SHOULDN'T BE SHY TO DISCUSS BLADDER WEAKNESS...

It's not the sort of issue you may discuss over coffee with friends, but nearly half – 47 per cent* – of all women suffer from bladder weakness at some point in their lives. Many women are too embarrassed to discuss it, even with their doctor, or think they just have to put up with it – you don't!

UNDER PRESSURE

The most common form of bladder weakness is known as stress incontinence: urine leaks out when there is sudden pressure such as laughing, sneezing or jumping. It's caused by a weak pelvic floor – the sling of muscle that supports your bladder, and its opening becomes looser and weaker than it was. This is commonly caused by pregnancy, obesity or simply just age.

DO YOUR EXERCISE

Stress incontinence is all about the pelvic floor muscles, and the main treatment is strengthening pelvic-floor exercises: this can significantly help 60 per cent of women who suffer.

These exercises involve squeezing muscles in the rectum, vagina and bladder at the same time and repeating that in cycles at least two or three times a day. You can get advice on a regime from a local continence advisor or a physiotherapist.



OVERACTIVE MUSCLE

Another type of weakness is called urge incontinence: this is when you cannot stop the urgency to urinate and leak before you make it to the loo in time. This comes usually from an overactive bladder muscle, and we aren't sure why it develops in most cases. About a third of women with incontinence will have urge incontinence. Some women have a combination of urge and stress incontinence.

CUT CAFFEINE

If you have urge incontinence there are things you can do yourself to lessen the issue: try to avoid caffeine and alcohol. They both increase urine production, which stimulates the bladder. Alcohol can also be a bladder irritant. Otherwise, drink normal amounts of fluids regularly: not drinking enough is not a good idea, as it makes the urine more concentrated and irritates the bladder even more.



LOSE WEIGHT

For any type of incontinence, weight loss may help, as there will be less pressure on the bladder. Stress incontinence is more common in women who are obese, and medical studies show that your symptoms are likely to improve even with a modest weight loss of five per cent. Smoking is also worth stopping if you have stress incontinence: the less you cough, the fewer accidents you're going to have.

PLAN AHEAD

Make your life as easy as possible, so you feel as comfortable as possible. You don't want to become obsessed with toilet locations, but it's good to have an idea where the loos are in places you visit often, such as in town, work and the supermarket. Don't be afraid to use products to make you feel as confident and secure, too – try something like TENA Lady Discreet, which is 20 per cent thinner than their usual pads.

Look younger with Lesley



Anti-ageing guru **Lesley Reynolds** reveals the latest treatments to help you stay youthful

Arm problems keeping you in cardis? Ditch the sleeves and say hello to strappy tops. Wave goodbye to bingo wings with my arm boot camp and the latest treatments.

ELEPHANT ELBOWS

A term given to excess wrinkles around the elbows, this is one of the first areas to show the signs of age – thanks to skin gathering in folds. A new procedure to tackle excess skin here is the thread lift, which uses threads to

form a supportive mesh under the skin and pull it tighter, all without cutting it. The threads are made from a special material which is absorbed over time. Results can last for a couple of years. Prices for this treatment start from £1,800.

CREPEY SKIN

A combination of micro-needling and glycolic peels can help thicken and improve skin tone. A hand roller featuring hundreds of needles is rolled across the skin leaving tiny pinpricks that encourages the skin to regenerate itself. The peel helps to dissolve the glue-like layer of dead skin cells to reveal fresher, more youthful skin. Take a course of treatments for best results. Dermaroller from £450; glycolic peels from £60.



BINGO WINGS

Hormone fluctuations and dramatic weight loss are common culprits for the excess fleshy fat that sits on our upper arms. Brachioplasty is a surgical procedure, in which an

incision is made from the armpit down to the elbow to remove excess fat. It's performed under general anaesthetic and can leave a scar. Downtime is two weeks. From £6,000.



AND DON'T FORGET...

- Lifting weights will help define arm muscles, but if you're overweight you will need to decrease body fat, too, by doing more cardio exercises and following a healthy diet – but do it slowly, as drastic diets can leave you with loose skin.
- Swimming, yoga and boxing are great ways to add definition to the biceps and

- triceps. Or invest in a resistance band for a good toning workout at home.
- A self-tan can disguise imperfections, or try the latest cheat: 'tantouring' gives the illusion of muscle definition. First, apply the base tan, and then blend a tiny amount of darker tan from the underarm to the elbow to define biceps.

For more information on Lesley and her team of doctors, please visit harleystreetskinclinic.com

*TENA LADY ONEPOLL SURVEY APRIL 2016

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