



WOMEN'S HEALTH

Women Don't Need To Suffer In Silence

(NAPSA)—Learning more about a surprisingly common and yet often misunderstood condition may help women get the help they need.

The problem is stress urinary incontinence (SUI), the most common form of urinary incontinence, which affects nearly one-third of American women over the age of 18. SUI is defined as the involuntary leakage of urine brought on by "stress" or pressure on the bladder such as when a woman laughs, coughs, sneezes or engages in physical activity.

According to a recent survey, the National Association For Continence (NAFC) found that few women recognize stress urinary incontinence as a legitimate medical condition. Eight out of 10 women mistakenly thought that the symptoms were a normal part of aging.

"Involuntary urine leakage can strike women in the prime of their lives. Whether a woman is 30 or 60, she needs to be made aware of the fact that urine leakage is not normal," said Nancy Muller, executive director of the NAFC. "Unfortunately, because the onset of symptoms is often gradual, many women learn to cope and only wait until their symptoms become truly unbearable before seeking any help."

Other key survey findings are:

- Women mistakenly indicated that having too much sex and drinking too much water puts them at risk for developing these symptoms.

- Over half believe that stress incontinence symptoms affect only women over 50.



New insights are leading to discoveries that can help women get relief from a common but embarrassing condition.

- Forty percent of women with the condition reported that they began experiencing symptoms before age 40.

Pregnancy and childbirth are the leading causes of stress urinary incontinence. Other causes include nerve and muscle damage, pelvic and abdominal surgery and general loss of pelvic muscle tone.

"We receive calls from women every day whose lives have been disrupted by stress incontinence—it affects careers, relationships and a woman's overall sense of herself," said Muller.

Research demonstrates that the large majority of women can be helped if they are properly diagnosed and seek treatment. New insights into how the central nervous system functions are leading to discoveries—both in medical devices and pharmaceuticals—for treating accidental urine leakage due to stress, or pressure on the bladder.

For more information about stress urinary incontinence, women can call 1-800-BLADDER (1-800-252-3337) or visit the National Association For Continence Web site at www.nafc.org.