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# Urethral Bulking for Urinary Incontinence



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## Surgery Overview

Urethral bulking to treat [urinary incontinence](#) involves injecting material (such as [collagen](#)) around the [urethra](#) . This may be done to:

- Close a hole in the urethra through which urine leaks out.
- Build up the thickness of the wall of the urethra so it seals tightly when you hold back urine.

Most bulking materials are injected around the urethra just outside the muscle of the urethra at the [bladder](#) outlet. Injecting the bulking material may be done through the [skin](#), through the urethra or, in women, through the [vagina](#). Needle placement is guided by the use of a [cystoscope](#) inserted into the urethra.

Urethral bulking procedures are usually done under [local anesthesia](#) in women, but men may require a [general](#) or [regional](#) anesthesia. A local anesthetic allows the

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person to stand up after an injection to find out if continence has been achieved. If continence has not been restored, another injection may be done immediately.

This treatment may help, but the effect wears off over time. It is common to need more treatments.

The surgery is used mostly for women and sometimes for men.

### What To Expect After Surgery

Most urethral bulking injections can be done in a doctor's office or surgery center. They rarely require a hospital stay. You may need to take it easy for a few days afterward.

### Why It Is Done

Urethral bulking may be done to treat:

- Mild [stress incontinence](#) in women.
- Stress [incontinence in women](#) who don't want or can't have surgery.
- Mixed (stress and [urge](#)) [incontinence](#).
- Mild [stress incontinence](#) in men that results from [prostate](#) surgery.

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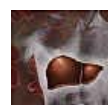
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## How Well It Works

Urethral bulking may work for some women. But fewer than 4 out of 10 women have long-term benefits.<sup>1</sup>

## Risks

The main risks related to urethral bulking are pain at the injection site, injury to the urethra, and migration of the bulking material.

## What To Think About

This surgery is used mostly for women and sometimes for men.

This treatment method avoids the risks associated with abdominal surgery.



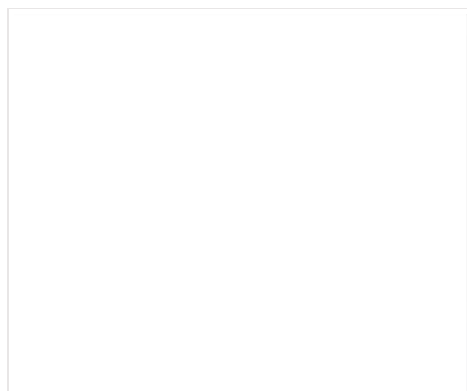
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Before having urethral bulking treatment, ask your doctor about the following:

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- **How much success has the doctor had in treating incontinence with surgery?** The success of surgical procedures for [urinary incontinence](#) depends on the experience and skill of the surgeon.
- **Is there anything I can do to increase the likelihood of a successful surgery?** [Losing weight](#), quitting [smoking](#), or doing pelvic floor (Kegel) exercises before surgery may increase the likelihood of regaining continence after surgery.

**Complete the [surgery information form \(PDF\)](#) (What is a [PDF document?](#)) to help you prepare for this surgery.**

## References

### Citations

1. American Urological Association (2009). Guideline for the surgical management of female stress [urinary incontinence](#) : Update (2009). Available online: <http://www.auanet.org/content/guidelines-and-quality-care/clinical-guidelines.cfm>.

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