

Freedom to Act Your Age Again

..... *The innovative procedure for women of every age with accidental urine leakage*



"The first time it happened, I was running on the treadmill, something I had done every day of my life for years. I thought, I'm too young for this. This is something that happens to women in their 60's," recounts 38-year-old Barbara Thomas of her experience with stress urinary incontinence. "But when it [accidental urine leakage] persisted, I got really depressed. I felt like a prisoner because I had to limit running and other activities I'd enjoyed my whole life," she continued.

Accidental urine leakage is no laughing matter. And yet it happens every day to more than 13 million American women simply by laughing, exercising or even coughing. The problem is so common, occurring in women as young as age 25; yet no one wants to talk about it. In fact, many women change their entire lives to avoid activities in which they might have an accident. They live each day fearing the next accident.

Sadly, only about half the women who endure persistent urinary incontinence will seek medical help for it. Many of them believe accidental urine leakage is a normal part of aging, something they just have to accept. Or they believe it will resolve itself. Others believe there is simply no effective treatment option.

"Urinary incontinence does not resolve itself. In fact, it usually worsens with time. The first step is to talk to your doctor," explains Fairhope gynecologist Dr. Angie McCool. "So many women suffer in silence. But once we start talking and we discuss treatment options, it's like a weight is lifted off their shoulder," McCool continues.

Today, women have options for eliminating stress urinary incontinence that previous generations did not. The first step is for your doctor to discern which type of urinary incontinence you have. A series of diagnostic tests called urodynamics can tell your doctor if you have stress urinary incontinence (SUI). The simple tests last only about 30 minutes. Most women with SUI are candidates for a revolutionary surgery called TVT.

"TVT is changing women's lives," explains Dr. Bobby Brown, a partner at Brown & McCool Gynecology in Fairhope. "TVT is performed on an outpatient basis, recovery time is just 2 to 3 days, and its success rate is greater than 90%," Dr. Brown adds.

How does it work? TVT stops urine leakage the way your body was designed to – by supporting your urethra. TVT can be performed under general or local anesthesia. The outpatient procedure is minimally invasive, requiring 2 tiny incisions near the groin. Most women experience very little or no discomfort after the procedure, and are able to return to normal activity the next day.

Just how effective is TVT long-term? Clinical studies indicate that 98% of women treated with TVT are still dry or report significantly less leakage seven years after treatment.

"The statistics for TVT are very encouraging. But on a personal, doctor-to-patient level, it's just so rewarding to be able to help change these women's lives for the better. They can exercise freely, be active with their children, and enjoy friends again" Dr. McCool says. She underwent the TVT procedure in 2005 and has been accident-free ever since, even after the delivery of her third child.

As it turns out, Dr. McCool is in a unique position to advise women about TVT. After having two children of her own, she suffered persistent urinary incontinence. She underwent the TVT procedure in 2005 and has been accident-free since.

"I can actually speak first-hand about it (TVT)," McCool says. "I know the encouraging statistics, but more importantly I know what it's like to get your life back," she explains. Dr. Brown performed her surgery.

Since 2004, Dr. Brown and Dr. McCool have been National Preceptors for TVT, providing clinical instruction to physicians nationwide on this minimally invasive procedure. If you have concerns or questions about your leakage, no matter your age, call 990-1985 for a consultation with Dr. Brown or Dr. McCool.

4 Questions to Ask Yourself:

- Do you experience unplanned, sudden urine loss while laughing, sneezing, or coughing, exercising?
- Do you wear pads to absorb urine leakage?
- Do you limit or avoid any activities to prevent leakage?
- When planning a trip, does the availability of restroom facilities affect your decision?

If you answered "yes" to even one of these questions, take the next step and talk to your doctor.

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