

Marathon runners may be at risk for incontinence

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While many marathon runners may be preoccupied with shin splints, chafing and blisters come race day, one thing they may not consider is their bladder health.

"The added stress on the body that comes with [running](#) a marathon can cause urinary stress incontinence problems during the race or down the road," said Melinda Abernethy, MD, fellow, Division of Female Pelvic Medicine and Reconstructive Surgery, Loyola University Chicago Stritch School of Medicine.

"People who already suffer from incontinence also are at risk for bladder-control issues while running," Dr. Abernethy said.

Urinary stress incontinence is the loss of urine from physical activity such as coughing, sneezing and running. It is the most common form of incontinence, which affects women more often than men.

Researchers from Loyola University Health System will survey Chicago area runners to study the relationship between long-distance running and pelvic-floor disorders.

"This study will help us to better understand the link between endurance running and pelvic-floor disorders, including [incontinence](#)," Dr. Abernethy said.

Until we know more, Dr. Abernethy recommends that runners should

monitor their fluid intake and go to the bathroom at least every few hours during a marathon.

"Putting off going to the bathroom during the race is not healthy for your bladder," Dr. Abernethy said. "Runners also should avoid diuretics, such as coffee or tea, before the race, because this can stimulate the bladder and cause you to visit the bathroom more frequently."

Dr. Abernethy adds that pelvic-floor exercises such as Kegels may help runners prevent [urine leakage](#) during the race. However, [runners](#) should speak with their doctor if they experience bladder-control problems during or after the marathon.

LUHS' Division of Female Pelvic Medicine and [Reconstructive Surgery](#) was the first of its kind in greater Chicago. It is still one of the few centers in the country that offers a single location for the multi-disciplinary diagnosis and treatment of women with pelvic-floor disorders. LUHS' urogynecological surgeons, doctors with the combined expertise of gynecology and urology, provide the most advanced medical and surgical care available for women with problems related to the lower urinary tract and the pelvic floor.

Provided by Loyola University Health System

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