

Women, regardless of their backgrounds, seek help for the 'got to go' feeling

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Regardless of their racial, ethnic, educational or socioeconomic background, women seek help for a frustrating—and ubiquitous—feature of becoming "a woman of a certain age:" the need be close to the women's room.

Those are the findings of a large study by UC Davis of urinary incontinence in [menopausal women](#), based on data from the Study of Women's Health Across the Nation (SWAN), a nine- year investigation of diverse menopausal women from six sites across the United States. The study is published online today in *Obstetrics and Gynecology*.

The study, of more than 3,302 study participants from such diverse locations as Oakland, Calif., Pittsburgh and Detroit, found that most women, regardless of their backgrounds, talked with their health-care provider about urinary urgency incontinence—leaking with the immediate need to reach the restroom—or [stress incontinence](#)—leaking with "coughing, laughing or sneezing"—over the 9 years they were followed.

All of the participants were transitioning through menopause. Some 68 percent of women reported monthly or more frequent urinary incontinence, either leakage with urgency or with coughing, sneezing or exercising.

Earlier studies have suggested that African-American women and women of lower [socioeconomic backgrounds](#) were less likely to seek

treatment.

"Our study results do not support previous findings that black women or women with lower socioeconomic circumstances are either less likely to seek care only at a higher level of bother of urinary incontinence frequency than white women or women of higher socioeconomic resources," said Elaine Waetjen, UC Davis professor in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology and lead study author.

Rather, Waetjen said, the strongest associations with seeking care were worsening and persistence of symptoms. That is important, Waetjen said, because urinary incontinence is readily treatable.

"By discussing their [urinary incontinence](#) with a health-care provider, [women](#) can learn about the variety of treatment options available to them, from behavioral changes to medications and surgery," she said.

Provided by UC Davis

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