

Bladder control an issue for young women

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(Medical Xpress) -- Traditionally considered an older women's condition, urinary incontinence (UI) affects one in eight healthy young women, causing depression in some, according to a new study.

Published today in high impact journal, the *Annals of Internal Medicine*, the study was undertaken to determine the prevalence of UI, risk factors, and effect on quality of life in otherwise healthy young women aged 16 to 30 years. The study is the first of its kind to look at incontinence in young women who have never experienced a pregnancy. Pregnancy is a known contributor to UI.

Monash University honours student Tessa O'Halloran, together with

Professors Susan Davis and Robin Bell, from the Department of Epidemiology and Preventive Medicine, surveyed 1000 healthy young women and found 12.6 per cent of the women had UI.

Professor Davis said the extent to which UI affects younger women who have never been pregnant had not been well understood until now.

“An embarrassing problem, UI is actually very common, affecting around 40 per cent of Australian women, but is usually attributed to having been pregnant, obesity or ageing,” Professor Davis said.

“Our study is the first to look at incontinence in young women who have never experienced a pregnancy. We found that one in eight young women are vulnerable to incontinence irrespective of common risk factors such as pregnancy or obesity.

Professor Davis said symptoms of UI interfered with everyday functioning and wellbeing, with half of the women reporting they worried about odour and restricted their fluid intake.

“We also found that UI for young women can have adverse effects on behaviour and general wellbeing. Women experiencing incontinence had lower wellbeing, greater levels of anxiety and were more likely to have a depressed mood,” Professor Davis said.

The study found sexually active women were more likely to report incontinence and, of this group, the likelihood of incontinence was halved for those who used the oral contraceptive pill.

Provided by Monash University

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