

Urinary Incontinence

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) monitors the quality of care of beneficiaries enrolled in Medicare Advantage plans. One method of measuring the quality of care is by surveying beneficiaries through the Health Outcomes Survey (HOS), which surveys beneficiaries on self-reported outcomes measures at the beginning and end of a 2-year period.

One area of inquiry on the HOS survey is urinary incontinence (UI), which can be associated with decreased quality of life. UI affects up to 30% of elderly people; and 85% of long-term care facility residents will suffer with UI¹. However, the true incidence of this disorder may be underestimated due to the social stigma of UI or the assumption that UI is a normal part of aging.

On the HOS survey beneficiaries are asked the following questions about UI:

1. Many people experience leakage of urine, also called urinary incontinence. In the past six months, have you experienced leaking of urine?
2. During the past six months, how much did leaking of urine make you change your daily activities or interfere with your sleep?
3. ***Have you ever talked with a doctor, nurse, or other health care provider about leaking of urine?***
4. ***There are many ways to control or manage the leaking of urine, including bladder training exercises, medication, and surgery. Have you ever talked with a doctor, nurse, or other health care provider about any of these approaches?***

As you can see, questions 3 and 4 ask about conversations beneficiaries have had with their doctors. Because UI is often a sensitive and embarrassing topic for many patients, they may not initiate the discussion if they are experiencing issues with UI. Therefore, we are looking to our providers to start these conversations with our members, which in turn may help them feel more comfortable discussing these issues. **Simply ask them, “Have you ever leaked urine?”** This simple question may be all it takes to reduce their risk of getting UTIs, suffering from depression, or being institutionalized, and may just result in their having an overall better quality of life.

¹ Demaagd, George A., and Timothy C. Davenport. "Management of Urinary Incontinence." P & T : A Peer-reviewed Journal for Formulary Management. June 2012. Accessed June 06, 2019. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3411204/>.