

Biofeedback for Urinary Incontinence

What is Biofeedback? Biofeedback is a technique used to help you learn how to control certain body processes. It has been used successfully to correct many health problems such as chronic pain, headache, stress, and high blood pressure. It is also useful for bladder and bowel problems. In particular, biofeedback can help you learn how to do effective pelvic muscle exercises that strengthen the muscle supports around the bladder, urethra, and rectum. Weak muscles can contribute to stress incontinence and bowel incontinence.

Biofeedback is also used to treat muscle dysfunction. When muscles are weak or damaged, it can be difficult to know whether the appropriate muscles are being exercised and whether they are being exercised with the proper technique.

How Does Biofeedback Work? Biofeedback involves the use of special electronic or electrical equipment to display information about certain bodily processes. These body signals are transmitted by small sensors to a unit that creates a picture image on a screen. The visual image on the screen then serves as a way to mentally connect with the way that your behaviour or actions can change the signal. The visual image may be color bars or a polygraph display (like an EKG tracing). This information communicates the muscle strength, endurance, and function.

Health professionals trained in biofeedback use this technology to assist patients to improve their muscle function. This may hasten the progress that you make in a pelvic muscle re-training program.

(Adapted with permission from the Practicing Physician Education Project 2006)