# Episode 1 – A wee problem

**Announcer:** This conversation has been made possible by the New South Wales Government's Menopause Awareness Campaign.

**Sarah White:** Hello and welcome. I'm your host Sarah White from Jean Hailes for Women's Health. When people think of menopause, they think of hot flushes, but there are so many other symptoms. In this series, we hear from you the things that are bothering you, the things that are confusing, and things you didn't know were symptoms at all.

Join us as we work through the Menopause Symptom Checklist.

With me today is my colleague Louise Brown, Head of Public Health and Education at Jean Hailes for Women's Health. Now, this question is about an issue that's more common than you might think.

**Listener Question:** In the past I used to wet myself, just now then. But I've noticed it's getting worse over the last few years. I often get home from somewhere and I'm rushing to get my key in the door to get to the loo. Sometimes I don't make it. Sometimes when I laugh and cough, there's leaking too.

**Sarah White:** It's actually quite common, isn't it? When we have these wee problems and, or ‘incontinence’ as it's called. What do you say to someone who's, who's having these challenges?

**Louise Brown:** Yeah, it is a really, really common problem that women experience, and it's because the hormone changes that happen with menopause, they affect the tissues around the bladder, and where the wee comes out. So they're not as strong anymore, they're not as flexible. They, you don't have the control that you had. So it is really common, it's nothing you've done wrong. And I think the most important message to women is if this is happening to you and it's affecting your daily life, you need to see someone about it.

**Sarah White:** So this is the good old-fashioned Kegel exercises or pelvic floor?

**Louise Brown:** Yeah. Pelvic floor exercises are really important for all of us, women, really important, and particularly after menopause because of these changes that can happen. We have a really great page on the Jean Hailes website, where we explain pelvic floor exercises. So if you are not doing them at all, that's that, you can start there.

But just because you're doing your pelvic floor exercises every day, when you stop at the traffic lights, which is what a lot of women do, doesn't mean you're doing them right. So it's really if, if, if you are doing the exercises and this leakage is still happening, you are not doing them correctly. So we need to find out.

**Sarah White:** And how do you know if you're not doing them correctly?

**Louise Brown:** Well, it's impossible to know unless you go and see a pelvic floor physio.

**Sarah White:** Pelvic floor physiotherapist?

**Louise Brown:** Yeah, that's right. So these are physios that have special extra training, particularly in women's health as well as other pelvic conditions, but really good on the pelvic floor exercises so they can actually assess you and make sure you're doing them correctly. And teach you how to do them if you're not doing them correctly.

**Sarah White:** And how do I find one of these pelvic floor physiotherapists? Would a GP, my GP will know where to send me?

**Louise Brown:** Yeah, your GP should be able to tell you where to find one. And you can also, if you don't have a GP, you can look up the Australian Physiotherapy Association and you can search for a physio that way. And you can specify that you want a women's health physio or a pelvic floor physio and then hopefully find one in your area. You don't need a referral to go and see them, but you do have to pay for that service. They can help you.

For some people, it might need more than exercises. You may need other help.

**Sarah White:** And we're talking then potentially we have ... products that people can, can wear just to help relieve some of that stress.

**Louise Brown:** Yeah, absolutely.

**Sarah White:** That you might leak when you shouldn't.

**Louise Brown:** Yeah, that's right. You can get continence products in the, in the pharmacy. So, but I would encourage you that that's just, in the meantime, that's not a solution. These problems can be helped. So it's really important to, to seek help from your GP or the physio as a starting point.

Don't put up with it, don't just think pads are the answer. We really wanna talk about other, um, interventions, medical interventions, that, that may be, that you have something that's put up to support your bladder inside. You may, some people need surgery, that would be way down the track, obviously. Um, but there are lots of different options and sometimes it can be that menopause treatments will actually improve this as well.

So it might be tablets that you need to take, which will alleviate menopause symptoms, but may also help these bladder symptoms as well.

**Sarah White:** Now, I imagine that there are going to be some people who are just so embarrassed about this that they don't even want to talk to their GP about it. What would you say to someone who's feeling like that?

**Louise Brown:** I think what I would say is that you will not be the first person to walk through the door with that problem. This is really, really common. As hard as it is to talk about, you won't be the first and you won't be the last person that's presented to the GP with this issue or the physio. If you can, take someone with you to the consultation, if that will help you feel more relaxed, but this is affecting your life, your quality of life. And it could make such a difference.

**Sarah White:** That's it from us today. We know menopause can be tough, but it's worse when you don't talk about it. To support conversations with your doctor, your colleagues, your family and friends, you can download the Menopause Symptom Checklist on the Jean Hailes for Women's Health website, and the New South Wales Menopause Toolkit.

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Information about the podcast

This podcast series has been made possible by the NSW Government's Menopause Awareness Campaign. For help talking about menopause, download the [Perimenopause and Menopause Symptom Checklist](https://www.jeanhailes.org.au/resources/perimenopause-and-menopause-symptom-checklist) and take it with you to your next medical appointment. For more information visit: <https://www.nsw.gov.au/women-nsw/toolkits-and-resources/perimenopause-and-menopause-toolkit>

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Information about Jean Hailes for Women’s Health

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