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Title (type in CAPITAL LETTERS, leave one blank line before the text)  A COMMUNITY-BASED EPIDEMIOLOGICAL SURVEY OF FEMALE URINARY INCONTINENCE. THE NORWEGIAN EPINCONT STUDY.  <u>Aims of study</u> The aim of the study was to assess the prevalence of any urinary leakage in an unselected female population in Norway, and to estimate the prevalence of significant incontinence.  <u>Methods</u> The EPINCONT Study is part of a large survey (HUNT 2) performed in a county in Norway during 1995-97. All citizens aged 13 years or more (appr. 100.000) were invited. The complete survey covered many topics. A mailed questionnaire was part of the invitation. Clinical and laboratory tests were performed at the screening-station, and the participants received a second questionnaire (this time containing questions about urinary leakage), which was to be returned by mail.  27936 (80%) out of 34755 participating community-dwelling women aged 20 years or more, answered our questions about frequency and severity of urine loss, type of incontinence, the duration of the condition, whether a doctor had been consulted on this matter, and to what extent the urinary leakage was experienced as a problem. A validated severity index was used to assess severity [1,2].  <u>Results</u> 25% of the participating women had urinary leakage (n=6876). Nearly 7% had significant incontinence, defined as moderate or severe incontinence that was also experienced as bothersome. The prevalence of both <u>any</u> incontinence and <u>significant</u> incontinence increased with increasing age (fig. 1).  Half of the incontinent women were experiencing symptoms of stress type incontinence alone. Symptoms of urge incontinence alone affected 11%, while mixed incontinence was stated by 36% of the cases. The fraction of stress incontinence symptoms was highest among the women between 25 and 49

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years of age, and then there was some relative decrease with increasing age.

The severity of incontinence varied between the different types. The fraction of severe incontinence was 17%, 28% and 38% in the stress, urge and mixed groups, respectively.

Two thirds of the incontinent women stated that their leakage was no problem or just a small nuisance while about 10% were much bothered or experienced their leakage as a great problem. There was a significant correlation between the severity index and the rating of incontinence as a problem.

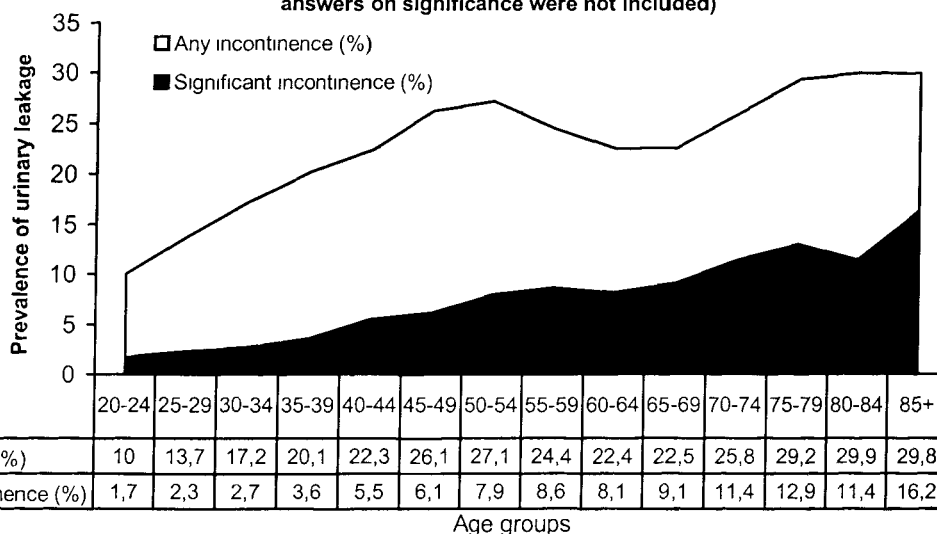
The impact of incontinence differed between types. Among women with symptoms of mixed incontinence, 47% were bothered. The corresponding figures for urge and stress incontinence were 36% and 24%, respectively.

A total of 26% of the women had consulted a doctor for their incontinence.

#### Conclusions

Urinary leakage is highly prevalent among adult women, and the prevalence is increasing with increasing age. 7% have significant incontinence, and this group should be regarded as potential patients.

Fig.1 Prevalence of any and significant incontinence. n=6170 (women with incomplete answers on significance were not included)



#### References:

1. Validation of a severity index in female urinary incontinence and its implementation in an epidemiological survey. J Epidemiol Community Health 1993;47(6):497-9.
2. A severity index for epidemiological surveys of female urinary incontinence. Comparison with 48-hour pad weighing tests. Neurourol Urodyn 2000;19(2):137-145.