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## Postpartum Urinary Incontinence: Don't Just Live With It

Pregnancy and the birth process cause [many changes in the body](#), some of which can certainly be jarring for new and expectant mothers who have never experienced these kinds of symptoms. The pelvic floor, in particular, is one area in which pregnant and postpartum individuals often see complications. Warning signs that don't dissipate after a few months, like bladder and bowel incontinence, frequent and urgent urination, constipation, pain, pressure and even frequent infections could be signs that specialized treatment is needed.

The good news is that these kinds of effects are not at all uncommon, both during and after pregnancy. On the other hand, these issues often become so normalized that patients are unaware that effective treatments and therapies are available, and this is [not just an issue mothers have to live with](#).

### Postpartum Pelvic Floor Complications are Highly Treatable

"There is a lot of people who have this and don't seek treatment because they think it's normal," [said Allison Polland, MD](#), director of the Maimonides Pelvic Floor Center.

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## FEATURED STORIES

“And I think I want to stress that, yes, this is common, but just because it’s common doesn’t mean it’s normal and doesn’t mean that you have to live with it. This is something that is very treatable.”

For new and future mothers, prioritizing pelvic floor health and gaining awareness of ongoing or potential complications is important. [The Maimonides Pelvic Floor Center](#) is introducing a new program called [Postpartum Exercise and Recovery Liaisons for Pelvic Floor Health \(PEARL\)](#), the first and only program in Brooklyn dedicated to offering state-of-the-art diagnostic and treatment services for postpartum women affected by one or more pelvic floor conditions.

“It’s for women who deliver here at Maimonides or elsewhere to address pelvic floor issues immediately after childbirth,” Dr. Polland said. “We are offering these women an opportunity to be seen by a urogynecologist, and they will have access to a transperineal pelvic floor ultrasound, which is something really unique. And we are the only place in Brooklyn that is offering that.”

[Urogynecologists](#) like Dr. Polland are urologists or OB/GYNs who have undergone extensive postresidency fellowships to focus specifically on pelvic floor reconstruction and disorders like urinary incontinence. Within the PEARL Program, they use techniques like dynamic MRIs, urodynamic testing, and urinary and bowel continence assessment in addition to ultrasounds to diagnose specific issues causing incontinence.

### Individualized Treatments Are Based on Patient Need and Comfort Level

Treatment options can range from noninvasive to medications and surgical treatment. Noninvasive treatments like pelvic floor physical therapy and [exercises](#) and biofeedback methods are effective for many mothers, especially when they experience incontinence when sneezing, coughing, laughing, or engaging in physical activity.

“The way I like to explain it is, imagine squeezing your vagina and pulling it up to your belly button. It’s really a squeeze and lift. And that’s something that you can do every single day,” Dr. Polland explained. “And that can really make a difference, especially if you feel like a sneeze is coming on. If you squeeze and then sneeze, you’re less likely to leak.”

[Injectable fillers like Botox](#) are also an option, lessening the size of the urethra and making leakage less likely. Another

treatment is implantation of a sacral neuromodulation device, which Dr. Polland describes as “a pacemaker for the bladder,” helping to relax the bladder and normalizing its activity.

### The Pelvic Floor Center Provides a Single Destination for Multidisciplinary Care

Within the PEARL Program and at Maimonides Pelvic Floor Center, patients have access to this variety of treatments through its multidisciplinary team including a urologist, urogynecologist, general gynecologist, colorectal surgeons, and pelvic floor physical therapists.

“The idea of having this multidisciplinary team is that no matter what kind of leakage you’re having, no matter what’s going on, you know that there’s a one-stop shop that can help you,” Dr. Polland said. “And we are not just surgeons. We are not only offering one thing. We’re offering the whole range of treatments.

“So if you want to try something conservative, we have the physical therapist for that. If you want to have surgery, we have the expert surgeons for that. It’s really one place where we can deal with all of your pelvic floor needs. We see both men and women and we address the full spectrum of pelvic floor issues.”

It is important to note as well that, as with many conditions, early detection and intervention can lead to better patient outcomes, and for [new moms experiencing pelvic floor dysfunction](#), early treatment can lessen risk of long-term symptoms and disability. 📌



Don't miss this free symposium, with both in-person and virtual attendance options for physicians and other healthcare professionals. Featuring some of the country's top stroke experts, this event is presented by the Jaffe Comprehensive Stroke Center at Maimonides, Maimonides Neurosciences Institute, and SUNY Downstate Health Sciences University Department of Neurology.

Register [here](#).



## Maimonides Offers Innovative Surgical Techniques to Treat Lung Cancer

Maimonides Medical Center has for decades led the adoption of new surgical techniques to improve the individualized [care offered to lung cancer patients](#), from diagnosis to lifesaving procedures.

“We have refined the process of figuring out which operations are best for which patients,” said [Jason Shaw, MD, Director of General Thoracic Surgery at Maimonides Medical Center](#) and [Director of the Maimonides Lung Cancer Screening Program](#).

For example, Maimonides has pioneered a variety of minimally invasive methods. From video-assisted and [robot-assisted thoracoscopic surgery](#) to image-guided videoscopic surgery, the new techniques make surgery quicker and safer. “We are now able to safely remove cancer in ways that spare the lungs as much as possible,” Dr. Shaw said. “Instead of pneumectomies, we can now more frequently perform lobectomies and segmentectomies. This development means that we can treat more people, including those who may have less lung capacity to begin with.”

Maimonides surgeons also perform cutting-edge, minimally invasive [diagnostic procedures](#). Using endobronchial ultrasounds and navigational bronchoscopies, physicians can identify cancerous tissues in locations that have been

hard to access in the past.

The physicians are also using new methods to control pain. “We are trying to [get patients away from narcotics, so we’re using advanced nerve blocks that freeze the nerves](#),” Dr. Shaw said. “This technique results in less pain and allows patients to continue doing what they would usually do in their lives, whether getting back to work, spending time with family, traveling, enjoying retirement, or exploring this post-pandemic world.”

All of these innovations mean that patients spend less time in

the hospital. “Our average length of stay is four days, while historically, for these types of conditions in other nonspecialized centers, it’s closer to a week,” Dr. Shaw said. “And at Maimonides specifically, we have not had a perioperative mortality doing a lobectomy for lung cancer in five years.”

Additionally, a large percentage of Maimonides patients are aided by these techniques. “We are a high outlier, in a good way, in terms of the percentage of patients with early-stage cancers that undergo [minimally invasive lobectomies](#),” Dr. Shaw said. “While across the county, approximately 50 percent of patients get minimally invasive surgeries; at Maimonides, it’s 90 percent.

“In fact, Maimonides was an early adopter of these techniques. We have been doing minimally invasive lobectomies since 2008 and robotics beginning around 2013. Since that time, we have done hundreds, if not thousands, of minimally invasive procedures for lung cancer. We have a proven record of excellence in this area and treating what is often a challenging and complex disease.”



# Maimonides Pediatricians Find Early Identification of Food Scarcity and Nutritional Insecurity Is Critical to Effective Intervention

Millions of people across the U.S. rely on Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits to help with buying food. Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, SNAP beneficiaries have received additional benefits called Emergency Allotment, or EA.

That changed at the end of February 2023, when the EA program came to an end. Still, many people face food scarcity and food insecurity. As a result, people and families often turn to nutrient-poor foods that cost less and are easier to access. This can lead to another problem: nutritional insecurity.

“We define nutritional insecurity as inconsistent access, availability, and affordability of food that promotes well-being,” says [Dr. Yonit Lax](#), an attending physician in the Divisions of General Pediatrics, Hospital Medicine, and Population Health at [Maimonides Children’s Hospital](#).



Dr. Lax and team recently published a [study in the Journal of the American Medical Association \(JAMA\)](#) highlighting gaps in screening for food scarcity. The team uncovered how conventional screening for food scarcity alone may not identify people who face nutritional insecurity. Based on their findings, she and her co-authors recommend adding nutritional insecurity screening questions to food scarcity screening in order to gain a more complete picture of those in need of intervention.

In their findings, Dr. Lax and team wrote, “Intervening at the start of food scarcity when families are first experiencing nutritional insecurity may not only improve diet quality, but also help avoid the development of food insecurity.”

The next step, Dr. Lax and team say, is to validate questions for nutritional insecurity that can be used broadly by other practitioners.

Taking a deeper look into the lives of patients and finding new ways to intervene isn’t new for Dr. Lax or others at Maimonides Children’s Hospital. Since 2019, the team here screens all patients and their families for social determinants of health to determine how they impact health and well-being—and to find ways to help.

Under Dr. Lax’s leadership, Maimonides Children’s Hospital has standardized and incorporated into the medical record a process to ensure every patient is asked about factors such as housing, food, schools, access to safe outdoor space, inequity, and structural racism. This work even led in 2021 to a letter-writing campaign by Dr. Lax and team designed to [change landlord behavior and improve poor housing conditions](#) that were affecting the health and well-being of patients.

“As physicians, we have the unique and powerful ability to act as voices for our patients and their families,” Dr. Lax says. “We can advocate on their behalf in simple and creative ways that we may have never thought possible. When we speak up, we can make a big difference.”

**To refer a patient to Maimonides Children’s Hospital, call 718.283.7500 or visit [maimo.org/children](https://maimo.org/children).** 



## Maimonides Doctors Ranked Among Castle Connolly’s “Exceptional Women in Medicine”

Twenty-one Maimonides Health physicians have been named ‘[Exceptional Women in Medicine](#)’ by [Castle Connolly](#). This distinction honors women clinicians at the top of their fields. They were nominated by their peers and evaluated on their professional qualifications, excellent patient outcomes, and more. 🌟

## Department of Surgery Welcomes All-Female 2023 Resident Class

March 17 was Match Day for this year’s new class of resident physicians across the country. Here at Maimonides, our [Department of Surgery](#) had a unique group of residents matched this year. For the first time ever, women comprise the entire class of General Surgery categorical and preliminary surgical interns. This group is yet another amazingly qualified cohort for the Department of Surgery, and is a testament to the department’s diverse and welcoming environment for new physicians. 🌟

## Maimonides Sees Successes in Recent CMS Hospital Compare Report

According to the [Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services \(CMS\)](#), Maimonides Medical Center’s score for hospital visits after [ambulatory surgery](#) is the best in the country, tied with just 9 out of 2,803 hospitals in the same rank. In the most recent CMS Hospital Compare report, MMC’s performance places it among the top 33 hospitals in the US—or the top 1% of hospitals in the nation—for overall mortality measures. MMC performed statistically “Better than National Average” in three mortality measures. For context, just six hospitals ranked “Better than National Rate” in four or five mortality measures. These achievements are thanks to our incredibly diligent patient care teams and our quality management department, who always make patient safety a priority. 🌟

## Dr. Allison Polland Discusses Urinary Incontinence on NY1

Last week, [Allison Polland MD](#), urologist and director of the Maimonides Pelvic Floor Center, [appeared on NY1](#) to speak about a prevalent pelvic health issue: urinary incontinence. She explained that there are several varieties of incontinence, which can be caused or worsened by age, pregnancy, or other factors, but that all are treatable through methods like medication, physical therapy, injections, or surgery. 🌟

## Dr. Farah Jooma Receives Pediatric Advocacy Training Grant

Farah Jooma, MD, pediatric resident at Maimonides Children’s Hospital, received the [America Academy of Pediatrics Community Pediatrics Training Initiative \(CPTI\)](#) Advocacy Training Grant. [The grant](#), four of which are awarded per year, allows a pediatric faculty resident pair to attend the AAP Advocacy Conference, after which the pair collaborate with their respective AAP chapter to utilize the grant to implement an educational project geared toward trainees. 🌟

## Provider Spotlight: Hematology and Oncology Specialist Dr. Abhigna Kodali

Many patients rely on [hematologists and oncologists](#) to get a second chance at life. Maimonides is lucky to have several brilliant doctors within these specialties, including [Abhigna Kodali, MD](#), a practitioner well-versed in both research and empathetic clinical treatment in this often challenging specialty.

After completing both her undergraduate and medical school studies at Drexel University, Dr. Kodali went on to complete her residency in Internal Medicine at Tufts Medical Center. This was immediately followed by a fellowship at the University of Illinois Chicago, where she honed her hematology and oncology skills.

### Research experience translates to patient benefit

[Research is a priority for Maimonides](#), and many of our providers are proud to develop and conduct robust clinical trials. From treatments for pediatric cancer to new technology to prosthetic aortic valves, we've got dozens of clinical trials going at any given time.

Cutting-edge research and treatment options are also central to Dr. Kodali's work. "I developed an investigator-initiated clinical trial to study the role of epigenetic reprogramming in increasing immunogenicity of breast tumors [during my fellowship at the University of Illinois at Chicago], and I look forward to getting involved with clinical trials here at Maimonides."

### A passionate practitioner at an exciting time in the oncology field

Cancer treatments have [evolved greatly](#) in recent decades, and new treatment options are leading to better outcomes. Dr. Kodali joined Maimonides at a time when cancer care is only getting more effective, and she knows it. "It is an exciting time to be part of this field as we are able to offer more cures, and see durable responses in many cancers with various medications that were not available before."



Her unmatched empathy and deep knowledge make her an invaluable asset to the oncology department, and to patients with [breast and genitourinary cancers](#). "I look forward to building longstanding relationships with patients and their families."

Patients may schedule an appointment with Dr. Kodali [online](#) or by phone at (718) 765-2500. 📞

## NEW PROVIDERS

**April 2023**

**Salah Almokadem, MD**, Hematology & Oncology, GI; Thoracic; Head & Neck, 718-765-2600