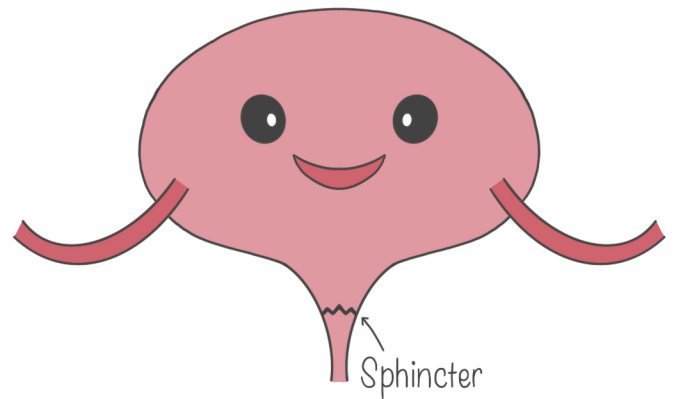
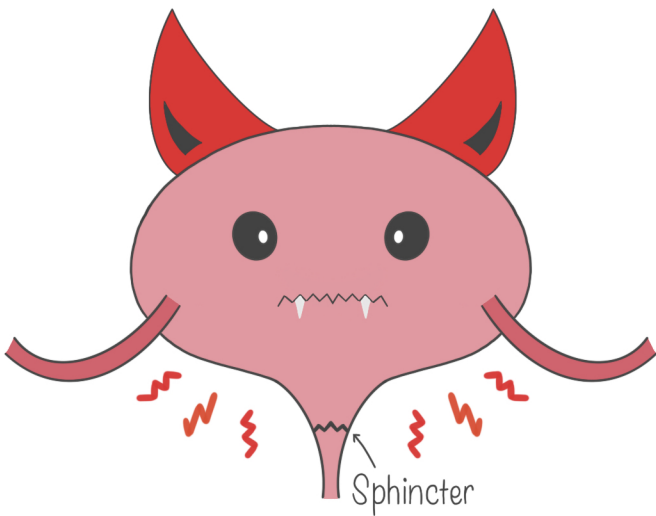


# What is Fowler's Syndrome?

Fowler's Syndrome is a urological condition that mainly affects young women and leads to them being unable to empty their bladder properly - some people can wee a bit on their own but not fully and some cannot wee at all (they are in full retention). There is a problem with the urethral sphincter that prevents them from urinating normally - the sphincter is the muscle at the neck of the bladder that 'opens' and 'closes' the bladder, allowing the bladder to empty.



There is no where near enough research into Fowler's and the cause is still unknown - for some people it develops following surgery and is thought to be caused by the anaesthetic. For some people it can follow giving birth or traumatic injury and for some it seems to develop spontaneously. If people are able to empty their bladder partially they may not realise for some time that there is a problem but may present with recurrent infections as urine is left to sit in the bladder for prolonged periods of time. When people are in full retention they usually present in A&E having been unable to empty their bladder for a number of hours. When catheterised any pain that they have been in usually goes away.



As well as being unable to wee, many people experience a lot of pelvic pain and often people do not have any sensation in their bladder. Recurrent infections can also be a complication either because of having a catheter or because of residual urine left behind after emptying the bladder.

The main test to diagnose it is a Sphincter EMG which uses a needle to record wave forms in the sphincter (it sounds like a whale when you listen to it!). Urodynamics may also be used which can measure bladder pressure, voiding rate and residual urine left behind. This can also show if there are problems with any other muscles in the bladder as well. The tests that are offered will depend on ability to empty the bladder or not.

There isn't actually any one treatment for the condition. Many people who have it will have to use a catheter at some point on their journey - sometimes this will be a permanent catheter (such as a urethral or suprapubic catheter) and some will self-catheterise. The frequency of this will depend on the individuals ability to wee.

There is a treatment called Sacral Nerve Stimulation which can help people restore the ability to wee normally. The person will have the device implanted and then be able to control stimulation to the sacral nerves which control bladder function. This can also be a treatment that helps with the pain associated with the condition. However, it is not widely available for bladder conditions and may not work for everyone.

Over half of people diagnosed with Fowler's Syndrome also have Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS) but this could be a coincidental link. Also, a lot of people have endometriosis, but again this isn't necessarily linked.