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## NEW SURVEY REVEALS INCONTINENCE AS THE GREATEST TABOO FOR WOMEN

World's biggest squeeze on Valentine's Day aims to combat stigma

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- *One in three women experience incontinence at some point in their life*
- *Bladder weakness impacts more women in the UK than hay fever*
- *One third of people unaware that light leakage can be cured through pelvic floor training*

It is estimated that one in three women experience incontinence at some point in their life<sup>i</sup>. Now women everywhere will be collectively squeezing their pelvic floor muscles in a world first.

Natracare, the UK's leading plastic-free period brand has partnered with pelvic floor expert and comedian, Elaine Miller, to host a live and record-breaking pelvic floor exercise class. The event will be live on Facebook at 7:00pm on 14 February 2019 – so women can join in from the comfort of their own homes.

Bladder weakness impacts more women in the UK than hay fever and yet it is very treatable. This groundbreaking squeeze aims to encourage a sense of community and discussion around a taboo subject, whilst providing tips and advice on daily exercises and products.

A new survey conducted by YouGov, on behalf of Natracare<sup>ii</sup>, uncovered that many people feel too embarrassed to discuss incontinence with a health care professional. Only 11% of women have spoken about urinary incontinence with a friend, and 6% with a nurse.

The survey also revealed a lack of knowledge around pelvic floor health. One third of people were unaware that light bladder leakage can be cured through pelvic floor training in the majority of cases.

Furthermore, 73% of people assume only elderly women suffer with urinary incontinence, when in reality it can impact women of all ages. Usually light bladder leakage (or stress incontinence) begins after having a baby, but it can also be caused by stress; by being overweight; by painful and complex conditions like endometriosis; by surgery or by medications.

Elaine Miller, physiotherapist, comedian and star of Gusset Grippers, states: *"The World's Biggest Squeeze is a clever way to get women thinking about their pelvic floors. Most women know they have a pelvic floor and that they should be doing exercises, but they're not confident about doing them properly and forget about them. Worse still, they wrongly think that leaking is normal – this is such a shame because physiotherapy works and women don't need to put up with it."*

*"I'm excited to be hosting the Biggest Squeeze online event and promoting this magnificent act of self love. Join me on the 14th February and I'll show you how to laugh and not leak. Spread the word and invite your friends!"*

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Shockingly, of the women surveyed who had experienced incontinence, 41% had chosen to use period pads or liners instead of specialised incontinence products – and over 24% have never used any products to manage bladder leakage.

A recent [published report](#) from Leeds University supports the survey findings, with the discovery that some women are so embarrassed by the idea of incontinence, they would choose to have wet knickers, rather than use anything at all. These statistics highlight the sense of shame that women experience because of the stigma around incontinence.

Vaginal mesh surgery, a procedure provided to women following childbirth to support pelvic floor muscles, has received widespread news coverage and criticism because of the damage it has caused to women. Pelvic floor training has been shown to be an effective way to prevent the need for use of procedures like mesh implants and long term, debilitating pelvic health problems.

Susie Hewson, founder and CEO of Natracare, said: *“We have been campaigning and developing products that support women and protect the environment for over 30 years. This campaign is no different. We need to talk honestly and openly about incontinence.*

*“People may not realise that one conventional incontinence pad takes around 500 years to break down into smaller pieces – they are full of plastic. Our biodegradable incontinence pads, suitable for stress incontinence, are light weight, plastic-free, totally chlorine-free and with organic cotton next to the skin. We want to unite women everywhere to feel confident that there are products available which can help them manage their leaking and protect the planet, too.”*

Incontinence products are the worst offenders for containing hidden plastic and petroleum-derived super absorbents. Natracare Dry & Light is the first plastic-free, sensitive alternative that gives women experiencing stress incontinence (or light bladder leakage) comfortable, reliable protection as well as caring for the environment.

You can join the conversation online by searching #PeopleUnite or following @natracare.

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**For more information, product samples and high-res images, please contact:**

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#### Notes to editors:

**Natracare** is the first company in the world to provide plastic-free, certified organic cotton tampons and natural and organic sanitary pads and liners. Natracare products are biodegradable and can even be composted. Susie Hewson created the brand in response to the growing danger to human health and the environment from dioxin pollution in the pulping industries with the chlorine bleaching of paper products.

[www.natracare.com](http://www.natracare.com)

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**Elaine Miller** is a physiotherapist, comedian and star of Gusset Grippers. Elaine qualified as a physiotherapist in 1993 and has had a keen interest in pelvic health ever since. <http://www.gussetgrippers.co.uk/>

**Dr Dani Barrington, Dr Lena Jaspersen and Isobel Sale** from University of Leeds released a report in January 2019 titled '*Breaking the silence on women's experiences of urinary incontinence*'.

The full report is available here: <https://wash.leeds.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/45/2019/01/Workshop-Report-FINAL.pdf>

#### References:

- 1) Bupa, <https://www.bupa.co.uk/health-information/womens-health/urinary-incontinence-in-women>
  - 2) All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 2,182 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between in December 2018. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB adults (aged 18+).
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