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Incontinence is the world's most common chronic condition. Around ten per cent of Austrians are affected by it. However the problem continues to be a taboo subject: two out of three sufferers do not talk about it, preventing access to successful treatment. Stress incontinence, in which urine is lost involuntarily when coughing, laughing or sneezing, is the most common form of incontinence, affecting 60 per cent of all cases. How it develops is largely unresearched. Scientists at the MedUni Vienna have now been able to demonstrate that proteins in the urine could play an important role.

Researchers at the University Department of Gynaecology, Core Facilities Proteomics and the Institute of Laboratory Medicine (KILM) at the MedUni Vienna are currently investigating the urine proteome, i.e. all of the proteins it contains, in people with and without stress incontinence. The first result: "People with urinary incontinence have more and different proteins. It is also apparent that certain inflammatory mechanisms have a role to play and that proteins are involved that indicate prior cell conversion," says Heinz Kölbl, Head of the Clinical Department of General Gynaecology and Gynaecological Oncology at the MedUni Vienna's University Department of Gynaecology.

From a diagnostic perspective, these findings could lead to the proteome being the clue to who is at risk of developing urinary incontinence and who isn't. "But the main thing we are expecting is information on how this condition actually develops," says Kölbl.

Provided by Medical University of Vienna