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Urinary Incontinence in Male Athletes: The Relationship Between Cycling Practice and Pelvic Floor Function

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Targeted literature review | PubMed evidence published up to 2026

WHY THIS MATTERS

Pelvic floor dysfunction and urinary symptoms remain under-recognised in male athletes, despite high training loads and repeated perineal exposure in cycling.

AIM

Evaluate links between physical activity, high-intensity exercise, cycling and pelvic floor function in men.

1 Methods

Targeted literature review

DATABASE	PubMed
ELIGIBILITY	Observational studies, systematic reviews and scoping reviews
POPULATION	Male athletes and cyclists
OUTCOMES	UI, LUTS and perineal pressure

Evidence was synthesised narratively because study designs and outcomes were heterogeneous.

2 Key findings

3.8–18.8% LUTS, including UI, reported across male athletic populations

20% UI reported in a small pilot study of elite male athletes

≈88% Reduction in central perineal pressure with a prostate volume-adapted saddle

The 20% estimate is difficult to generalise because the pilot study included few participants.

3 Cycling-related evidence

What the literature suggests

- **Training load** — Weekly physical activity volume shows a dose-dependent association with LUTS prevalence.
- **Cycling exposure** — Years of cycling show a slight association with LUTS, independent of age.
- **No clear UI link** — Cycling duration was not significantly associated with UI in observational evidence.
- **Mechanical factors** — Intensity, duration, riding position and saddle characteristics may modify perineal pressure and symptoms.

4 Discussion and implications

The evidence points to a relevant but under-investigated problem.

Training load and cycling-related mechanical factors may contribute to urinary and urogenital symptoms. However, the evidence base remains heterogeneous and predominantly observational, so causal relationships remain uncertain.

PRACTICAL FOCUS

- Saddle ergonomics
- Riding position
- Clinical screening
- Standardised diagnostic criteria

5 Take-home message

Pelvic floor health deserves a visible place in male sports medicine.

Future longitudinal studies should combine standardised diagnostic criteria with detailed measures of training load, bike fit, riding position and saddle design. Screening may help identify symptoms earlier and guide targeted support.

FUTURE RESEARCH

Longitudinal
Standardised
Mechanistic
Clinically relevant

KEYWORDS Urinary incontinence • Cycling • Male athletes • Pelvic floor dysfunction • Lower urinary tract symptoms

Evidence and transparency

Search source: PubMed
Publication window: studies available up to 2026
Evidence types: observational studies, systematic reviews, scoping reviews

Limitations

Available studies are heterogeneous and predominantly observational. The pilot estimate of 20% UI in elite athletes comes from a small sample, limiting generalisability.

Visual source: "Cyclist Road Bike Illustration", BestBikeFit4U guide on saddle pressure and perineal numbness. Used as a thematic visual; consult the original source for licensing and attribution requirements.