

Urology Department

Continence in the confused elderly

Staying continent requires a very complex function that allows us to delay passing urine or opening our bowels until we are in the appropriate place.

This skill may be affected by a dementing illness and incontinence may:

- Be occasional
- It may occur as the illness progresses
- It may become more frequent

Incontinence may be treatable so it should be discussed with a healthcare professional.

Urinary infection

Treatable conditions include urinary infection. Signs of urinary infection include:

- A burning sensation when passing urine
- An expression of pain or have difficulty talking
- Urine may appear cloudy or smelly

Infection does not always show specific symptoms so ask a doctor or nurse to check.

Medication

Side effects of some medication can affect the bladder and bowel. Discuss medication with a doctor if this is causing problems. Ask if any medication can be changed to relieve things.

Never stop or change medication without taking advice from a GP or nurse.



Patient Information

Constipation

Constipation may cause urinary incontinence as it can cause pressure on the bladder

Bowel leakage – a loose, smelly motion can leak around a hard stool (poo) that is blocking the bowel

Discuss this with a healthcare professional for advice on how to improve the bowel.

Continence skills

It is important to help a person maintain their own continence skills as long as possible.

When incontinence is due to lack of recall, or if people are forgetful, they may gradually lose memory of what to do in the toilet. They may also lose memory of where the toilet is. Advice can be given to help manage this.

How can you help?

- Get to know the person's habits
- Bladder and bowel actions can have a pattern
- Note the most likely use of toilet
- Remind them to use the toilet when they are most likely to go
- Keep this as a regular routine
- Put a clear sign or picture of a toilet on the door to remind the individual where the toilet is
- Offer the individual the use of a toilet at regular two-hourly intervals to help maintain continence.

Communication

If verbal communication is difficult, look for other signs which may prompt you to suggest they use the toilet:

- Fidgeting
- Wandering
- Pulling at clothes

Patient Information

Routine

Ensure they drink plenty to keep the bladder and bowel healthy; a GP or nurse can advise on this. Using the toilet can be complicated as it involves lots of steps to make it successful:

- Try to keep using the toilet to a few, regular, easy steps
- Use the same language when asking or describing what is happening
- Use the same routine inside the toilet

When the person is not with you

Decide a routine, keep to it and tell others. It is important to maintain a routine when the person is not with you:

- Encourage the same routine so that the skills remain in place
- Keep in contact with their healthcare professional who is helping you
- Discuss and monitor changes as they occur to prevent further problems

Other things to consider

- Aids, adaptations to ease toilet usage
- Seek advice on:
 - clothing, for example, Velcro not zips or buttons
 - diet for a healthy bowel
 - hygiene
 - mobility
 - special problems – to manage wetness or maintain dignity

Discuss your concerns with your healthcare professional and ask them to work with you on suggestions.

Further Information

For further information, please contact the Urology Department

Telephone: 024 7696 5296

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format, please contact 024 7696 5296 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

Patient Information

The Trust operates a smoke free policy.

To give feedback on this leaflet please email feedback@uhcw.nhs.uk

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