

Continence and toilet problems in people with Dementia

Information for carers

Incontinence can be humiliating and embarrassing for a person with dementia or Alzheimer's. This advice leaflet suggests some ways to help.

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 function may be affected by cognitive impairment and there could be occasional problems which become more frequent as the person's illness progresses. These problems may be treatable, and so should be discussed with a healthcare professional.

It is important to help a person maintain their own continence skills for as long as possible. If people are forgetful, they may gradually lose memory of what to do in the toilet or where the toilet is.

Treatable conditions may include:

Urinary infection - Be sure you know the signs:

- The person is more confused or upset;
- Their urine is cloudy and smelly;
- They complain that it hurts when passing urine.

Medication - Side effects from some medication can affect the bladder and bowel. Please discuss this with the person's GP if you think this is causing any of the problems. Perhaps medication can be changed?

Never stop or change medication without taking advice from the GP.

Constipation - May cause urinary incontinence through pressure on the bladder.

Bowel leakage - loose smelly motion can leak around a hard stool that is blocking the bowel.

Please ask the health professional for advice on to improve bowel movement.

How you can help:

- Get to know a person's habits;
- Bladder and bowel actions can have a pattern;
- Note most likely use of toilet;
- Remind them to go to the toilet or take them at regular intervals;
- Keep to a regular routine.

If verbal communication is difficult, look for other signs like:

- Fidgeting
- Wandering
- Pulling at clothes

If the person is urinating in inappropriate places, try to remove any objects that may be mistaken for a toilet.

Make sure there are no obstructions on the way.

Place a large picture of a toilet on the outside and inside of the toilet door as they may not recognise the door that leads to the toilet.

Give them a book or newspaper whilst they are on the toilet this may encourage them to stay.

Leave the toilet door open at all times so they can see the toilet and that it is obvious when the toilet is vacant.

Make sure that there is a night light in the bathroom as it can make the task of locating the bathroom a little easier at night.

Consider placing glow in the dark tape on the floor that leads to the bathroom this can help if they are wandering around in the middle of the night looking for the toilet.

Check for the placement of mirrors in the bathroom, they may confuse the image with someone else in the bathroom.

Consider changing the colour of the toilet seat as they may experience difficulties if the bathroom facilities are the same colour.

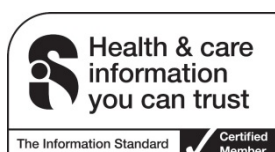
Toilet paper can easily be seen if you have a contrasting colour to the wall.

For more information or advice, please contact:

Continence Team

024 7696 1427

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