

CONTINENCE IN THE CONFUSED ELDERLY

“Being demented - A human being imprisoned in a damaged brain.”

The way we stay continent is a very complex function that allows us to voluntarily postpone passing urine or having our bowels opened until we are at the appropriate place.

This skill is something that can be affected by a dementing illness. It may happen just occasionally or, as the illness progresses, more frequently. It is very important to understand that it may be due to a treatable condition so the first thing to do is discuss it with a Health Care Professional.

It is very important to try to help this person keep their own skills for as long as possible.

Lack of recall – sadly when people become forgetful this may also mean they gradually lose the memory of what to do in a toilet or even where the toilet is. Advice can be given to help you manage in these circumstances.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

- Get to know the person's habits. This may seem a strange and very personal thing to suggest but usually our bladder and bowels have some pattern to them. It may be worthwhile noting when the person is most likely to use the toilet. As their memory starts to play tricks upon them, you can help by reminding them to go to the toilet at the times when you know they are most likely to go. Keep this as a regular routine.
- It may be that the person finds it difficult to verbally let you know they need to use a toilet. If this is the case you will need to become aware of other signs such as fidgeting, wandering or pulling at clothing and suggest they use the toilet.
- Make sure they drink enough during the day to keep the bladder and bowels healthy. People can forget to drink, or may be reluctant to. Your nurse or GP can advise you.
- Advice about special products to help manage any wetness and to keep the person dignified, comfortable and dry.
- To provide the time to listen to your worries, suggest other ideas and to work with you.

The Whittington Hospital NHS Trust

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