

- Advice about special problems, 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.

You can self-refer to our Bladder & Bowel Care Service. The link will take you to the referral form – just complete and email to

**arti.centralbooking@nhs.net
(hyper link to referral form)**

Bladder & Bowel Care Service
River Place Health Centre
Essex Road
London N1 2DE
Telephone: 020 3316 8401
Open Monday – Friday 09:00 – 17:00

Organisations that can help

Bladder and Bowel Community (formerly bladder & bowel foundation) is the UK wide service for people with bladder and bowel control problems. B&BC provides information and support services, including a confidential helpline.
7 the Court
Holywell Business Park
Northfield Road
Southam
CV47 0FS

General Enquiries: 01926 357220
Email: help@bladderandbowel.org
Medical Helpline: 0800 031 5412

Age UK

Tel: 08001696565
www.ageuk.org.uk

Patient advice and liaison service (PALS)

If you have a compliment, complaint or concern please contact our PALS team on 020 7288 5551 or
whh-tr.whitthealthPALS@nhs.net

If you need a large print, audio or translated copy of this leaflet please contact us on 020 7288 3182. We will try our best to meet your needs.

Twitter.com/WhittHealth
Facebook.com/WhittingtonHealth

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Continence in the confused elderly

A patient's guide



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.

Treatable conditions may include

Urinary tract infections - some may complain of pain or burning when passing water or may show an expression of pain or may have difficulty talking. You or the person may notice that their urine looks cloudy or smells. Sometimes an infection can be present without specific symptoms so it is always worthwhile asking your nurse or doctor to check that all is well.

Prostate gland trouble (in men) – your GP will be able to assess if this is a problem and advise you about treatment.

The side effects of some medication - may affect how your bladder and bowel work. It is always advisable to discuss this with your doctor if this could be the case and they may be able to change your medication or alter the dose. Please take advice before stopping or changing the time of taking any medicines.

Severe constipation - may cause urinary incontinence through pressure on the bladder or bowel leakage where loose, smelly motion leaks around the hard stool blocking the bowel. It is important to seek advice from a health care professional.

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

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

- Get to know the person's habits. This may seem a strange and very personal thing to suggest but usually our bladder and bowel actions 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 be reluctant to. Your nurse or GP can advise you.

- When you think about it, using the toilet is a very complicated thing to do involving lots of different steps to be successful. Try to keep using the toilet to a few, regular, easy steps. Always use the same language to ask or describe what is happening and keep to the same routine inside the toilet.

- Decide the toilet routine, keep to it and tell others. This is important so that if the person spends time apart from you, the routine to use the toilet is the same and the skill is encouraged to remain.

- Keep in contact with the health care professional that is helping you. Discussing and monitoring changes as they occur can help prevent them from becoming larger problems.

How others can help

- With aids and adaptations to make using the toilet easier
- Advice about clothing so that the person can get quick access to themselves in the toilet – e.g. velcro rather than zips or buttons
- Advice about diet to keep bowels healthy
- Advice about hygiene
- Advice about mobility