

INCONTIENCE



The loss of bladder or bowel control often occurs as dementia progresses. Sometimes accidents result from environmental factors; for example, someone cannot remember where the bathroom is located or can't get to it in time. If an accident occurs, your understanding and reassurance will help the person maintain dignity and minimize embarrassment.

CAUSES:

- Physical changes to the brain. The messages between the brain and the bladder or bowel no longer work properly.
- Family and friends not around.
- Directions or task is misunderstood or too complicated.
- They may feel fear, anxiety and irritability especially if the environment is not familiar.
- This could be a reaction to a new medicine.
- They could be experiencing medical conditions such as Urinary tract infections (UTI), constipation, prostate gland problems, and irritable bowel syndrome.
- Not reacting quickly enough to the sensation of needing to use the bathroom.
- Not being able to tell someone that they need to go to the bathroom due to difficulty communicating.
- They may not be able to find or recognize the bathroom.

SOLUTIONS:

- Establish a routine for using the toilet. Try reminding the person or assisting her to the bathroom every two hours.
- Give the person with dementia regular reminders about using the toilet can help reduce accidents.
- Schedule fluid intake to ensure the confused person does not become dehydrated. Know that some drinks (coffee, tea, cola, or beer) have more of a diuretic effect than others. Limit fluid intake in the evening before bedtime.
- Use signs (with illustrations) to indicate which door leads to the bathroom.
- Install handrails and have raised toilet seat to make it easier for them to use the toilet.
- Incontinence pads and products can be purchased at the pharmacy or supermarket. A urologist may be able to prescribe a special product or treatment.
- Use easy-to-remove clothing with elastic waistbands or Velcro closures and provide clothes that are easily washable.
- Check the position of mirrors in the bathroom. The person with dementia may confuse their reflection for someone else already in the bathroom.
- Make it easier for the person to find their way to the toilet. Move furniture and leave the bathroom door open.
- Provide the person with some privacy.
- Keep the bladder, urinary tract and bowels healthy by drinking enough throughout the day, provide a balance diet, keep them active and build a bathroom routine.
- Avoid drinks that irritate the bladder such as tea, coffee, soda, and alcohol.
- Practice pelvic floor exercises, these exercises aim to reduce stress incontinence, caused by weakness of the pelvic floor muscles due to childbirth or ageing.

HAVE A PLAN:

- Always keep clean laundry with you.
- Talk to your doctor.

GOING TO THE BATHROOM AT NIGHT:

- Install a motion sensor light or night light in the bedroom, hallways and bathroom.
- A commode or urinal bottle can be left in the bedroom at night for easy access.
- Not drinking anything two hours before going to bed.

HOME SUPPLIES:

- Mattress covers.
- Furniture slipcovers.
- Plenty of extra bed linens.
- Commode, Handrails, and raised toilet.
- Adult diapers (most prefer pullups at home).
- Scented trash bags.
- Air fresheners.

TRAVEL BAG SUPPLIES:

- Complete change of weather-appropriate clothing.
- Plastic bags to contain soiled clothes.
- Adult diapers (experiment with various styles for easy public bathroom removal).
- Booster pads (removable diaper liners).
- Wipes.
- Small towel to stand on.
- Cologne and/or air freshener.

CONSTIPATION:

- Laxatives may help, available over the counter.
- Massage the person's stomach to ease the blockage.

ENSURING GOOD PERSONAL HYGIENE

- Wipe from front to back (which helps to prevent infections), rather than back to front.
- Remind them to wash their hands after they used the bathroom.

IF THEY HAVE AN ACCIDENT:

- Remember it is not their fault.
- Try avoiding any embarrassment.
- Avoid appearing angry or upset.
- Make sure that they are cleaned properly after having an accident and using the bathroom.
- Wash them with mild soap and warm water, and dry carefully before putting on clean clothes and fresh pads.
- Soiled clothes, reusable pads or bedding should be washed immediately, or soaked in an airtight container until they are washed.
- Used disposable pads should be stored in a disposal bag or other appropriate container and thrown away as soon as possible.