Continence in the Confused Elderly

The way in which 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 an 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.

Incontinence is not inevitable, it does not happen to everyone with dementia, many cases of incontinence are treatable.

Treatable conditions may include:

- Urinary Tract Infection. Someone may complain of pain or burning when passing water or may show an expression of pain if they have difficulty communicating. The urine may be cloudy or smelly, your doctor or nurse will be able to check that all is well.

- Prostate gland trouble (in men). Your GP or Continence Advisor will be able to assess if this is a problem and advise about treatment and help managing the leakage.

- The side effects of some medication can affect how your bladder or bowel works. It is advisable to discuss this with your doctor or nurse to see if it may be possible to change them or alter the dose.

- Constipation may cause both urinary and faecal incontinence.

- When people become forgetful this may also mean that they lose the memory of what to do in the toilet or even where the toilet is.

- Reduced mobility can make getting to the toilet difficult and hazardous.

How can you help?

- Take the person to the toilet at regular intervals, or remind them to go. Make a diary of their routine so that you can make sure that you take them to the toilet at a time they would naturally want to go.

- Try to use the same few, easy steps when using the toilet. This simple routine will encourage the skill to remain.

- Look out for signs, such as restless movements, getting up and down or pulling at clothes.

- Make sure that clothes are easy to unfasten and take off. Velcro fastenings are useful.

- Take to the toilet after meals most people like to open their bowels after a hot meal.

- Reduce fluids during the evening (especially drinks that contain caffeine like tea, coffee and fizzy drinks), ensuring that they drink enough during the day to keep bladder and bowels healthy (1½ litres).

- If mobility to the toilet is difficult a commode, urinal or handrails may be useful. Nightlights in the bathroom can also be of help. Make sure there are no obstacles. Contrasting colours such as a black toilet seat and white pan can be easier to see.

Seek advice about continence from a professional. It is important that you have the support that you need. Discussing and monitoring changes as they occur can help them prevent becoming a larger problem.

References

Alzheimer's Society
www.alzheimers.org.uk


Useful Contacts and Support Groups

Bladder and Bowel Foundation
SATRA Innovation Park, Rockingham Road, Kettering, Northants, NN16 9JH
Tel: 08453450165.
Email: Info@bladderandbowelfoundation.org
Website: www.bladderandbowelfoundation.org

Alzheimer's Disease Society
Gordon House
10 Greencoat Place
London
SW1P 1PH
If you would like more information, please contact:

Continence Nursing Team
Shrublands Health Centre
Magdalen Way, Gorleston
Great Yarmouth  NR31 7BP

Tel: 01493 809977
Fax: 01493 418222

Compliments, comments, concerns or complaints

PALS may be the best starting point if you have a question or concern about the NHS. If you would like to find an NHS dentist, know where your nearest doctor is or talk through a problem you have had with a service, you can contact the PALS service.

To contact PALS:  Call 01502 718666
Monday to Friday, 8am – 3.30pm
Email: ECCH.patientliaison@nhs.net

Or write to:
PALS,East Coast Community Healthcare
1 Common Lane North,
Beccles, Suffolk.  NR34 9BN

If you would like this leaflet in large print, audio cassette, Braille or in a different language please contact Andrea Dawson on 01502 719521 or andreadawson@nhs.net

Jei šios publikacijos kopija noretemete gauti savo kalba prašome susisiekti su Andrea Dawson telefono numeriu: 01502719521

Jezeli chcieliby Panstwo otrzymać niniejsza publikację w tłumaczeniu na język polski, prosimy o kontakt z Andrea Dawson pod numerem telefonu: 01502719521

Pokud byste chteli kopi této publikace ve Vášem jazyce, prosím kontaktujte Andrea Dawson ovou na telefonním císle 01502719521

Bu yayinin kendi dilinizde bir nüshasını istseniz, lütfen 01502719521 nolu telefondan Andrea Dawson ile temasa geçiniz

Se pretender uma cópia desta publicação no seu idioma, por favor contacte Andrea Dawson no número 01502719521