

# Incontinence

In the later stages of dementia, it is not uncommon for someone to lose control of his or her bladder or bowel. This medical term for this problem is incontinence. While losing bowel or bladder control can be part of the natural progression of dementia, there are many factors that can contribute to whether or not this occurs and the severity of the problem.

If bowel or bladder incontinence starts suddenly or worsens dramatically consult your health care provider immediately. This can be a symptom of a more serious medical issue such as infection. Some medicines, including over the counter medicines, have side effects that make incontinence more likely. It is important to bring a list of all medications both prescribed and over the counter to health care appointments.

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## Tips for Controlling Incontinence

### Creating a Bathroom Schedule

Encouraging your loved one to go to the bathroom on a schedule can reduce the number of accidents that occur. If accidents are occurring between trips to the bathroom, you may need to increase the frequency of scheduled bathroom trips. Try to use the same toileting routine every day. Also make sure your loved one uses the toilet before leaving the house or when arriving at a destination.

### Control Intake

What your loved one eats and drinks can make a difference. Colas, coffee, and tea can all increase urination. Limit intake of liquids after dinner and in the evening to help control incontinence at night time.

### Watch for Non-Verbal Cues

As communication becomes more challenging, watch for non-verbal clues that indicate that your loved one needs to use the bathroom. This might include fidgeting, grunting,

or moving to a different place in the room. Make notes when your loved one uses the bathroom and when accidents occur. You may find patterns that help avoid accidents in the future.

## Easy to Remove Clothing

If your loved one has difficulty dressing and undressing, finding clothes that are easy to remove can reduce the number of accidents that occur. This also makes changing clothes simpler when accidents happen. Consider items with elastic bands or limit the amount of buttons, buckles, and zippers on clothing.

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## Managing Incontinence

If you suspect your loved one is becoming incontinent, consider using adult disposable underwear instead of regular underwear. It is possible that your loved one may be resistant to use these products. Thus, it is important to introduce these slowly and consistently. Find a fun way to get him or her to accept the product. Remember that sometimes humor is your best bet.



## Incontinence Products

A number of products are available including pads or absorptive briefs. Pads and protective products are available for beds and furniture. Consider using washable cushion covers or waterproof your own cushions by sliding them into plastic garbage bags. Make sure to bring extra pads and clothing when leaving the home for a long period of time. It is also recommended to bring an extra change of clothes in the event an accident happens.

## Preventing Incontinence-Associated Skin Breakdown

In order to prevent skin problems from developing, it is important to make sure that your loved one remains clean and dry after accidents occur. Recognize changes in your loved one's skin condition to prevent skin breakdown. Use soft pads and clothing and keep them wrinkle free.

- If the skin is too dry, moisten with ointment or lotion
- If the skin is too moist, dry it with powder

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