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## **Incontinence and Toileting Tips for Caregivers**

Many people experience incontinence issues in later life, whether it is a specific bladder or bowel-related medical problem, a mobility issue making it hard to get to the bathroom on time, or the result of a disease such as Alzheimer's. While incontinence products help with leaks and provide a sense of security when traveling, to promote both physical and mental well-being, encourage the person to use the toilet or a commode for as long as possible before using them full-time.

Some of the following tips have proven helpful to others:

- Remain calm and understanding of the situation - accidents will happen even when every precaution is taken;
- Promote a regular toileting schedule (example every two hours during the day), as well as making suggestions. Encourage the person to sit on the toilet for an extended time if necessary in order to relax;
- Prompt a bathroom visit when you recognize the signs that there may be a need that the person may not recognize;
- Protect the mattress and the person. There are specially designed mattress protectors that cover the entire mattress to prevent the mattress from being damaged. There are also washable and disposable underpads that absorb moisture and therefore protect the sheets and the person;
- Wear gloves when assisting with toileting or handling incontinence products;
- Wash hands before and after assistance to protect both you and the person;

### **Bathroom Toilets:**

Depending on mobility issues, bathroom mats should be removed to avoid tripping, and the pathway should be free from clutter. Assistive devices like walkers or canes need to be readily available to get to the bathroom. Toilet seats can be purchased in a different color than a bathroom floor to assist people with vision problems or Alzheimer's disease to see the toilet better. Ensure that the person wipes thoroughly and washes their hands afterward. Assistive devices are available to bolt support arms to the toilet to assist in getting on and off the toilet. Raised toilet seats

and bolted toilet risers can raise the height of the toilet seat making it also easier to get on and off the toilet.

### **Commodes:**

Using a portable commode in the bedroom for anyone with limited mobility is helpful to avoid falls in the middle of the night with rushing to the bathroom, or for anyone who receives little warning. Bedpans and urinals can also be used in bed, but usually have mixed results with care recipients. A portable commode with the pail removed can also be used over the toilet seat if handrails make it easier for getting off and on, or finding the toilet seat. The commode can be moved into the shower as well for safety while showering.

As is the case with the toilet or commode use, provide as much privacy as is safe to do so, either leaving the room for a few minutes or looking the other way. Allowing as much time as needed to be successful, understanding it may involve several attempts.

### **Incontinence products:**

There are a number of incontinence products on the market. Special incontinence pads to insert into underwear may be all that is necessary for some individuals, while others that are still mobile and able need pull up briefs. Full briefs with tabbed sides are used for ease on people who are unable to assist in their dressing due to mental or physical limitations preventing them from standing to pull up, or spend the majority of time in bed.

Although incontinence products are designed to absorb moisture away from the skin, it is important to check and change briefs or pads regularly in order to prevent skin irritations from occurring.

### **Catheters:**

Many urologists will recommend a full-time catheter only when other options either fail or cease to be options based on the physical condition of the individual. Using catheters can reduce the amount of accidents, falls from hurrying to the bathroom, and allow a person to regain some independence and socialization perhaps lost. However, caring for the catheter and drainage bags becomes very important to avoid infections, irritations, and clogging.

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