



Urinary Incontinence in Nursing Home Residents

What is Urinary Incontinence?

Urinary incontinence (UI), also known as “loss of bladder control” or “urinary leakage,” is the involuntary loss of bladder control. It can range from a mild bladder leak to uncontrollable wetting. UI is very common in nursing homes and long-term care facilities.

How Can Urinary Incontinence Be Managed or Treated?

Sometimes nursing home staff or residents and families think the best way to handle UI is to use an indwelling catheter, which is a tube inserted into the bladder to drain urine. Using a catheter is **NOT** appropriate for treating UI and can lead to catheter-associated urinary tract infections. Other methods to manage UI should be used instead.

Addressing UI starts with a bladder assessment. The assessment can help identify causes that might be reversible and what type of incontinence you are experiencing. This information is then used in developing the care plan, which lays out the approaches staff will use to address your incontinence.

Toileting programs

Toileting programs can help residents manage incontinence and gain some control over their bladder function. There are several different types of programs:

- **Habit training.** Habit training is based on your usual pattern of toileting. Staff determine your natural toileting habits and record this pattern. Then an individualized toileting schedule is developed based on this information. You are taken to the toilet at times that match your toileting habits or needs.
- **Prompted toileting.** Prompted toileting includes using a schedule and prompting you to toilet, and providing positive encouragement when you request assistance to go to the bathroom and/or void while on the toilet. It works well with cognitively or physically impaired residents.
- **Timed toileting.** Timed toileting (also known as “scheduled toileting”) is when you are taken to the toilet on a set schedule, such as every 3 hours. Timed toileting works well with residents who are not capable of independent toileting. It is the toileting technique most frequently used to help residents manage their UI.

Methods of managing Urinary Incontinence if you do not respond to a toileting method

- External catheters in men
- Temporary catheter
- Absorbent pads
 - Should be based on your needs and preferences
 - Should only occur after an appropriate evaluation and after alternatives are considered
- Urinals and bedpans
- Treatment medications
 - Medications can help residents with UI but might also have side effects that could potentially worsen incontinence episodes

What Can Nursing Home Staff Do to Help Manage Urinary Incontinence?

- Make sure to know your care plan
- Consistently follow your individualized toileting method if one is being used
- Respond promptly when you ask for help or ring the call bell
- Report any concerns or problems to supervisors

What Can You and/or Your Family Members Do to Help Manage Urinary Incontinence?

- Learn more about UI
- Make sure staff are aware of your toileting habits
- Monitor to ensure you are being toileted according to the toileting schedule or that you are being kept clean and dry
 - Report any concerns or problems to staff

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