Bladder & bowel health

Healthy bladder and bowel habits can help you avoid bladder and bowel control problems such as incontinence. Incontinence can have a major impact on your quality of life.

Preventing incontinence

- In many cases, incontinence can be prevented by adopting healthy diet and lifestyle habits. Here are some simple steps that can be incorporated into your daily life to help prevent urinary incontinence and faecal incontinence.

Drink well

- Aim to drink 6-8 cups (1.5 - 2 litres) of fluid per day, unless otherwise advised by your doctor. Spread your drinks evenly throughout the day.
- Cut down on alcohol, fizzy drinks and drinks that have caffeine in them as they irritate the bladder.

Eat a healthy diet

- Eat plenty of fibre to improve bowel function by absorbing water and adding bulk to your bowel motions to avoid constipation. Fibre is found in multi grain or whole grain breads, cereals and cereal products, fruit, vegetables, legumes, nuts and seeds.
- Eat 2 servings of fruit, 5 servings of vegetables and 5 servings of cereals and breads each day.

Tip: A high fibre diet means you need to drink plenty of fluid as the fibre needs water in order to bulk up your bowel motions.

Lead a positive lifestyle

Maintain an ideal body weight as excess body fat strains the pelvic floor and can lead to bladder and bowel control problems.

- Stop smoking as chronic coughing associated with smoking can weaken the muscles of your pelvic floor.

Let us know what you think

The Byron Shire Respite Service would like to know what you think about activities and programs you are involved in and our organisation. Please take a few minutes to complete our questionnaire and hand it to a staff member next time you see them.
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Get active

- Aim to exercise for 30 minutes most days. Exercise stimulates movement of the bowel, and even gentle exercise like walking helps.
- Do your pelvic floor muscle exercises regularly. Obesity, pregnancy, childbirth, regular heavy lifting and a chronic cough can weaken the pelvic floor, but you can strengthen these muscles with specific exercises.

Practice good toilet habits

- Go to the toilet when you get the urge to open your bowels, as this is the most effective time to completely empty your bowels. Most people get the urge first thing in the morning or following a meal when eating has stimulated the bowel.
- Get into the correct sitting position on the toilet. Sit on the toilet, elbows on knees, lean forward and support feet with a footstool. This helps to fully relax your pelvic floor and sphincter muscles. Bulge out your tummy, relax your back passage and let go (don’t hold your breath or strain). When you have finished firmly draw up your back passage.
- Avoid constipation as this affects bladder and bowel function. If you often strain to move your bowels, the pelvic floor stretches and weakens over time.
- Don’t get into the habit of going to the toilet ‘just in case’ - only go when you need to.
- Visit your doctor as soon as you suspect a urinary tract infection.

Get help

If you experience bladder or bowel control problems seek help, as the symptoms will not go away on their own and may worsen over time. For further information speak to your doctor or a continence nurse advisor on the National Continence Helpline on 1800 33 00 66.

If you or someone you know is affected by incontinence it’s important to remember that:

- You’re not alone - almost 4.8 million Australians are affected by incontinence.
- It affects both men and women, regardless of your age or background.
- It can be treated, managed and in many cases cured there is help available.

Where to get help

There are many avenues for help with bladder and bowel problems. For most people, a good starting point is to visit your doctor. If you are making an appointment with your doctor, ask for a long consultation to give you time to explain the problem without feeling rushed.

Avenues for help include:

- Health professionals.
- The National Continence Helpline. Freecall 1800 33 00 66.
- Speak to a continence nurse advisor on the helpline for more information on government financial assistance to help you manage incontinence problems.
- The Incontinence Support Forum where people can now anonymously talk openly about the issues of bladder and bowel health. It is an opportunity to ask your questions in a safe environment and share your story. Visit the forum at: http://www.continence.org.au/forum/index.
- A continence assessment helps identify the type and causes of the problems being experienced by the person and assists the continence advisor to tailor an individual management strategy. These will differ and also take into account the living environment and lifestyle of both caregiver and cared-for person.
- Talk to a nurse on the continence Helpline on 1800 33 00 66

Dementia and incontinence

The help line receive many queries in regards to how to manage both urinary and bowel incontinence for the person suffering from dementia.

Sudden onset of incontinence

When people are living in the community, it is often a difficult scenario to make suggestions for without doing a comprehensive assessment as there are so many potential possibilities for urine and faecal incontinence.

- Have a continence nurse visit to look at the living environment, take into account dietary and fluid intake, explore other possible medical possibilities and medications and most importantly, identify previous toileting habits.
● The correct continence appliance is imperative as well as considering eligibility for funding assistance.

How to get her/him to stay sitting on the toilet

● Identify the persons usual toileting times through keeping a diary for both bowel and bladder as well as understanding the persons usual bowel routine prior to being diagnosed with dementia.

● If the loo is too cold, sitting there for any length of time will be uncomfortable, so make sure that the loo is reasonably warm. A person with dementia may not be able to tell you when they’re cold.

● Paste a picture of a toilet on the back of the door which may help to orientate the person to where they are. If the person used to read a magazine or newspaper in the toilet, make sure that they are equipped with this when they go for a session in the loo.

● Allow them to get up and down a few times and try music which can sometimes be calming.

● Above all try to remain calm...you know your relative best but if all else fails have a talk to a continence nurse who hopefully has the experience of dealing with dementia clients.

If you are caring for someone with incontinence, the first step is to speak to your doctor or call the Incontinence Helpline on 1800 33 00 66 for a professional continence assessment

Refusal to use the toilet when away from home

A common complaint is where the person with dementia refuses to use a public toilet on an outing - but as soon as they get in the car to go home or on the way home they wet themselves.

● Tell the person with dementia that you need to go to the toilet and ask if they can come with you. They might then willingly follow you into the toilet where you are able to assist them and get them to use the toilet as well. While this often demands an explanation to other users of the toilet, at least it keeps the person dry!

● People with dementia when confronted by an ‘unknown’ often refuse to comply. There are many steps involved in the process of toileting which, if you do not have the cognitive capacity to organise yourself, can be a terrifying experience.

It’s sometimes easier to refuse to participate than become entangled in a process that you cannot carry through.

● Keep in mind, with the ongoing deterioration in dementia, some days may be better and easier for both of you than others.

Difficult to get to drink

One of the basic instructions for good bladder and bowel habits, directs us to drink an adequate amount of fluids during the day to maintain kidney and bladder health. This may be problematic.

● This is where a thorough assessment becomes critical to finding a possible solution. Continence nurses not only deal with bladder and bowel problems, but the underlying problem of dementia as well, which calls for some very innovative management strategies.

● Prompting and cues are usually the recommended approach to getting the person to drink fluids that they enjoy but when they live at home alone, there is no one there to prompt them or cue them into this process.

If you are sniffling, feeling achy and tired, and have a fever, you may be coming down with the common cold or the flu. You are most contagious during the first 24 hours through the first few days of catching a cold virus, and you will feel miserable. With a cold, you will not get much done, and you’ll get well faster if you get some rest. Don’t be generous with your germs. Keep your cold to yourself, and stay home!
Elder Abuse helpline

The NSW Elder Abuse Helpline is a state-wide service to the community, and is a free call to: 1800 628 221.

The new NSW Elder Abuse Helpline is operated and managed by Catholic Community Services and is funded to support people within the community.

Minister for Ageing Andrew Constance says that ‘According to the Australian Institute of Criminology, as many as 50,000 people aged 65 and over in NSW have experienced some form of abuse or neglect, whether it be physical, psychological or financial.’

The Helpline will provide practical assistance to older people, family members, frontline service and support staff, and provide them with ways to respond and reduce abuse of older people. It provides practical guidance and advice to older people living in the community including information about how to appoint or change a power of attorney, speak to Centrelink or their bank if they are concerned about financial abuse, and in what instances they should contact the police.

Mr Constance encourages seniors to call the Helpline about any concerns they have for themselves or someone they may know.

Complaints about suspected abuse occurring within a residential aged care facility should be directed to The Aged Care Complaints Scheme on 1800 550 552.

Next meeting of Carers Coffee Club
BYRON SHIRE CARERS meet every 2nd Tuesday of the month at 10:30 am at the Brunswick Valley Community Centre. Tea & Coffee supplied. The next meetings are on Tuesday 14th May & the 11th June. We’d love to see you! RSVP Barbara Chambers on: 6685 1619

Notice Board

Need support?
● National Dementia Helpline 1800 100 500
● Carers Counseling Service 02) 6628 6416
● Carers NSW 1800 242 636
● Far North Coast Respite & Carelink Centre 1800 052 222
● NSW Elder Abuse Helpline 1800 628 221
● National Continence Helpline 1800 330 066
● Call Colin or Barbara at Byron Shire Respite Service Inc to discuss any aspect of your role as a carer. 02) 6685 1921

● For emergency respite, call the hotline on: 1800 052 222

Need a holiday?
● Lifebridge Care for U Program 02) 6674 2267
● Beachside Lake Ainsworth Centre 02) 6687 7168

Aids:
● Wheelchair and Wheelie Walker Maintenance 02) 6684 1959
● BrightSky Cards for Continence Aids Payment Scheme (CAPS) 1300 886 601

Need Transport?
Veteran and Widow Card Holders free for medical appointments:
● Byron Shire Limousines 02) 6685 5008
● Brunswick Limousines ph David on 0412 855 747
● North Coast Shuttle For bookings call: 1300 875 895

Supported transport for health & wellbeing to major Brisbane Hospitals including: Princess Alexandra, Mater, The Royal Brisbane, & The Prince Charles.

This service is for residents of Ballina Shire, Byron Shire, Clarence Valley, Kyogle Shire, Lismore Shire, Richmond Valley & Tweed Shire.

Monday, Wednesdays & Fridays
Departs: 7am Ballina with one stop in the Byron Shire & one stop in the Tweed Shire.
Arrives: 10am Brisbane
Departs: 2pm Brisbane
Arrives: 5pm Ballina
(all times are approximate)

Passengers need to meet the funding criteria which generally means being frail aged and living independently (over 65 or 50yrs for Indigenous Australians) Younger people with disabilities are also eligible. An accompanying carer may travel free of charge. If you do not fit the above criteria and seats are available, you may still be able to travel, please enquire. This service has an onboard assistant to support with basic needs. The total cost for a return trip is $50 from Ballina or Byron areas.