

Caregiving in
The Comfort of Home®
Caregiver Assistance News

“CARING FOR YOU... CARING FOR OTHERS”

Toileting in Alzheimer’s Disease

Incontinence usually begins in the late part of the middle stage of Alzheimer’s Disease (AD). It is a symptom of AD that caregivers fear they will not be able to handle. Many learn to take it in stride and find that it is not the “deal breaker” they expected it to be. Knowing how to use the proper products will help you with the discomfort you may feel.

Confusion about how to find the bathroom, inability to get there on time, or a urinary tract infection may be the cause of the problem. Be sure to ask the doctor if there could be a *physical* cause of the problem, rather than the progression of AD.

Reducing Incontinence Problems

A regular toileting schedule and reading the signals when the person needs to go to the toilet may help the person to continue to use the toilet for a longer time. However, you will probably need to use protection for the bed since the person may sleep through the need to go.

- ✓ Always be calm and understanding when accidents occur.
- ✓ Wear gloves. This prevents the spread of disease; wash hands before and after assistance.
- ✓ If the person cannot use the toilet and cannot learn to use a urinal, commode, or in-bed toileting, incontinence products will be

necessary. If the person can move around on his own, do not encourage bed toileting.

- ✓ Watch for signs of urinary tract infection (blood in urine, cloudy urine with sediment, etc.).
- ✓ Because he may not recognize the need to use the toilet, “suggestions” to go to the bathroom can be very helpful—just a simple reminder after a meal, for example, or early in the morning, or before bedtime.
- ✓ If the person is in the early stage of AD, leave a bathroom light on at night so a person can find the bathroom easily. If it is in another room, make sure the “pathway” is marked. Marking a path can be done with something simple, such as reflecting tape. A person with middle-stage AD cannot toilet himself independently. Some caregivers will wake the person at night to take him to the bathroom, while others prefer to use incontinence products. You may need to try different incontinence products before you find the one that works best for the person in your care.



SAFETY TIPS—Fecal Incontinence

Fecal incontinence (FI) is an inability to control bowel movements, which may result in stool leaking. Although it can be embarrassing to discuss in detail, it is crucial to gather as much information as you can to help the person’s physician understand the situation. Injury to the nerves that sense stool in the rectum or those that control the anal sphincter can lead to FI. The nerve damage can be caused by childbirth, constant straining during bowel movements, spinal cord injury or stroke. Some diseases, such as diabetes and multiple sclerosis, also can affect these nerves and cause damage that leads to FI.

Keeping a diary of eating and drinking habits, symptoms, and digestive issues can help narrow down possible causes. The doctor may also perform some diagnostic tests, including a colonoscopy, to determine the underlying cause. For those who are caring for a person with FI, it can be difficult to know how to handle and help with the symptoms. For seniors and their caregivers, adequate planning can help decrease the likelihood of accidents and ensure you are prepared in the event one does occur.

Source: *Caring for a Loved One with Fecal Incontinence*; agingcare.com; MayoClinic

NEXT ISSUE... INFECTION CONTROL IN THE HOME – STANDARD PRECAUTIONS

Caregiving in The Comfort of Home®

Our Purpose

To provide caregivers with critical information enabling them to do their job with confidence, pride, and competence.

Ordering Info

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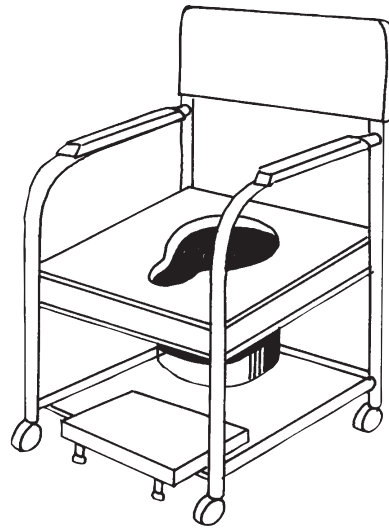
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Using a Commode

A portable commode is helpful for a person with limited mobility. The portable commode (with the pail removed) can be used over the toilet seat and as a shower seat.

Using a Portable Commode

1. Gather the portable commode, toilet tissue, a basin, a cup of water, a washcloth or paper towel, soap, and a towel.
2. Wash your hands and put on gloves.
3. Help the person onto the commode.
4. Offer toilet tissue when the person is finished.
5. Pour a cup of warm water on female genitalia.
6. Pat the area dry with a paper towel.
7. Remove the pail from under the seat, empty it, rinse it with clear water, and empty the water into the toilet.
8. Remove your gloves and wash your hands.
9. Offer a washcloth so the person can wash his or her hands.



Portable Commode Chair

Using the Bathroom Toilet

If the mobile person is missing the toilet, get a toilet seat in a color that is different from the floor color. This may help him see the toilet better. If the person with AD fails to remember to wipe himself or wash his hands, you will have to prompt him to do it, help him to do it, or do it for him.



Raised (elevated) toilet seat



Toilet Frame

Gentle Reminder - Get Your Flu Shot

Ideally, get your flu shot in October, which will help ensure you're protected when the virus begins circulating. The vaccine's protection lasts about six months. Peak time also varies by location. Note that it takes two weeks for the vaccine to become fully effective.

Source: CDC

Taking Care of Yourself—Stay Connected

Many psychologists suggest feeling connected to others is essential to happiness and well-being. Yet, so many of us, even though we are very busy taking care of children and/or loved ones, can feel "disconnected."

Find one activity to do each week that connects you to a community of your peers. Enjoying an activity with some of the same people each week creates a wonderful feeling of being a part of something bigger. The key is to make sure that you are speaking with others at the activity, not just sitting quietly in the back of the room. Try a choir group, ballroom dancing, a book club, or a class at a local community college or church.



Inspiration

If you want to change the way people respond to you, change the way you respond to people.

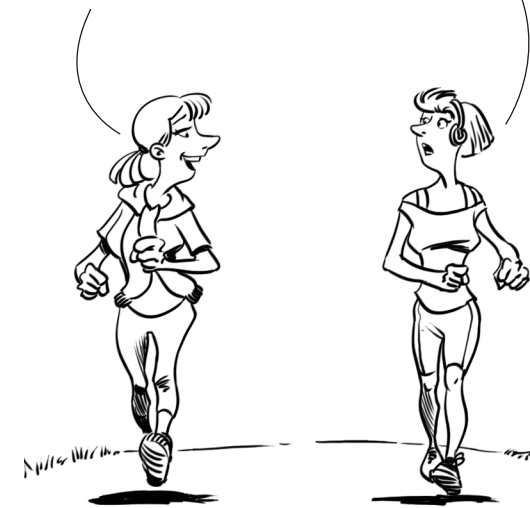
~ Timothy Leary

Live Life Laughing!

I really wish I listened to my mother.

Why, what did she tell you?

I don't know. I didn't listen.



Memory Care - Sexual Behavior

Sometimes people with dementia touch or expose their genitals in public or try to touch others. Ask yourself what the behavior is telling you. It may be as simple as clothing being too tight or wet, or he needs to use the bathroom. It may be that he is trying to express affection or longing for physical contact. Try to divert his attention. He is likely to quickly forget the attempt.