

Incontinence and Quality Care

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Background:

Incontinence is common among older adults, especially those in nursing homes. However, it is not considered a normal part of aging. There are specific risk factors and consequences associated with incontinence, as well as questions you can ask and steps you can take to address continence issues.

Risk factors for Incontinence:

- Urinary tract infections
- Obesity
- Medications
- Enlarged prostate in men (benign prostatic hyperplasia – BPH)
- Decreased estrogen levels in women
- Weakened pelvic floor muscles
- Aging changes in the bladder, putting older adults at risk for bladder urgency.
- Neurological impairments such as dementia, Parkinson's Disease, and stroke.

Consequences of Incontinence – A Resident May:

- Fall
- Be frail
- Choose not to participate in activities to ensure access to a bathroom. This can result in social isolation.
- Have skin problems (from wetness or the hygiene products used)
- Have poor health-related quality of life

What You Can Ask:

- What TYPE of incontinence does your loved one have: urine, fecal or both?
 - If your loved one has urine incontinence, ask: Is it transient (acute) or persistent (chronic) urinary incontinence?
 - If your loved one has persistent urinary incontinence, ask: Is it stress, urge, mixed, overflow or functional persistent urinary incontinence?
 - If your loved one has fecal incontinence, ask: Has a bowel program, fiber and fluid intake combined with appropriate laxative and toileting scheduling, been trialed?
- Who is leading the assessment and management of the incontinence? While an interdisciplinary team approach is best, research demonstrates the need for a champion to lead best practices of incontinence assessment and management.

How You Can Help:

- Discuss your loved one's continence issues at Care Planning meetings.
- Notify nurses of changes in your loved one's continence.
- Be realistic – it may not be possible for all residents to be completely continent.
- Offer your assistance and support to residents and staff. Toileting assistance is one of the most effective strategies for promoting continence in long-term care. However, it is labor intensive.
- Work to overcome barriers to quality care for those with incontinence (i.e.: staffing issues, "dirty work" stigma, and challenging measurement criteria).
- Recognize and celebrate quality continence and incontinence care.

Resources:

American Medical Directors Association

10480 Little Patuxent Parkway, Suite 760 Columbia, MD 21044

Phone: 1-800-876-2632 Fax: 410-740-4572

Email: <http://www.amda.com>

A professional association comprising medical directors specializing in the long-term care continuum. AMDA is a recognized specialty organization by the American Medical Association and the American Society of Internal Medicine. The website provides information on a variety of long-term care topics including incontinence position statements and clinical practice guidelines.

National Kidney and Urologic Diseases Information Clearinghouse

3 Information Way Bethesda, MD 20892-3580

Phone: 1-800-891-5390 Fax: 703-738-4929

Email: nkudic@info.niddk.nih.gov

An information dissemination service of the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK). The NIDDK is part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), one of eight health agencies of the Public Health Service, which is under the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, which has a variety of information pertaining to incontinence.

Wound Ostomy Continence Nurses Society National Office

15000 Commerce Parkway, Suite C Mt. Laurel, NJ 08054

Phone: 1-888-224-WOCN (9626)

<http://www.wocn.org>

An international society providing a source of networking and research for nurses specializing in enterostomal and continence care.

National Association for Continence (NAFC)

P.O. Box 1010 Charleston, S.C. 29402-1019

Phone: 1-800-BLADDER

<http://www.nafc.org/>

A not-for-profit organization dedicated to improving the lives of individuals with incontinence. Site visitors can enter their zip code to search the Continence Resource Service to find a healthcare provider in their area.

The John A. Hartford Institute for Geriatric Nursing

<http://www.hartfordign.org/>

This web site will bring the visitor to the "Try This" series that includes a 2-page UI information sheet to share with nursing staff.

Society of Urologic Nurse and Associated (SUNA)

National Headquarters, East Holly Ave Box 56 Pitman, NY 08071-0056

Phone: 1-888-TAP-SUNA

<http://www.suna.org/>

An international organization dedicated to nursing care of individuals with urologic disorders.