



Three out of four people who have bowel or bladder control problems can be cured or helped to better manage their problem.

WHAT ARE CONTINENCE PRODUCTS?

Continence products are used to manage the symptoms of poor bladder and bowel control. They may be used short term to help you while being treated or long term if the poor bladder and bowel control can't be cured.

Continence advisors know about the broad range of products that can help manage bladder or bowel control problems. They can help you choose a product that will give you protection and confidence in your everyday life.

Your doctor or continence advisor can look for the cause of your problem and offer you some treatment. If you do nothing and just use pads or other continence products without trying treatment, your problem could get worse.

WHAT TYPES OF CONTINENCE PRODUCTS ARE THERE?

Absorbent pads and pants

Pads and pants come in a range of sizes and how much urine they can absorb. Some pads are meant to be used one time only, and then be thrown out. Some other pads and pants can be washed and used many times. You can get special mesh/net pants that keep the pads from slipping. Some pads have 'sticky' strips which will stick to the pants to keep the pad in place.

Absorbent bed sheets and chair covers

In these products, the top layer that sits closest to the skin lets the urine through, but stays dry while the lower layers soak up urine. They are not meant to be used at the same time as disposable pads, as they work best when the skin is in direct contact with the sheet.

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Penile sheaths / external catheters

Penile sheaths are made of silicone and are mostly self adhesive and lined with non-latex glue which sticks to the penis. The other, open end of the sheath is joined to a leg bag where urine can drain.

If the man is mobile, a leg bag can be used which is hidden under his clothes. The sheath can be joined to a two litre bag for overnight drainage. Skin reactions can be seen through the clear silicone as soon as they occur. Bags which connect to the sheath should always have wide bore tubing to let the urine flow into the bag with no backflow into the sheath which could cause it to come loose. Bags worn on the leg should be firmly fixed to the thigh or lower leg with the straps that come with the bag and emptied before they get heavy enough to pull off the sheath.

Other products to help toileting

Bedpans and urinals (male and female type) can be used if you are confined to bed. Commode chairs placed by the bed at night can help if you cannot walk to the toilet. Raised toilet seats and chairs that can be moved over the toilet can also help if you have trouble sitting on low toilets.

WHAT SHOULD YOU THINK ABOUT WHEN CHOOSING A CONTINENCE PRODUCT?

The best product is one that works well, is comfortable and helps you to have a normal life. When choosing a continence product, you should think about:

1. Your individual bowel or bladder control problem

Your choice of product will depend upon your own control needs at any one time. Choose a pad that will hold how much urine you might pass and change it as soon as it is wet. This is better for you and cheaper than leaving a large pad in place for many hours. Wearing pads damp with urine or bowel motions can cause skin rashes or bladder infections. Also, any smell can be cut down if the pad is changed as soon as it is wet or soiled and the skin rinsed and dried before a new pad is used. Choose a pad that does not have a coloured plastic cover which can show through light coloured clothes or make a noise when you move.

2. Your personal lifestyle

Personal needs for work, home and your social life should also guide your choice of products. Continence advisors can help with advice on special products to use when you play sport or travel long distances.



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3. Your mobility

The vast range of products means that you need to think about your habits and abilities to choose the best product for your problem. Such things as how easily you can get to the toilet or how easy you find changing pads can help to guide the right choice of product for you. There are many types of products, and one will be just right for you.

4. Supply of products

Some continence products can be bought in supermarkets and chemists, while others may be more easily bought from specialist medical suppliers. You might need expert help to choose the right one for you. Contact the **National Continence Helpline (Freecall 1800 33 00 66)** who provide you with advice or can put you in touch with a continence advisor in your area.

5. Disposal

Most disposable products can be thrown away in normal household rubbish. Continence products should NEVER be flushed down the toilet.

6. Washing guidelines

Reusable products should tell you how to wash them on the package when you buy them. Don't buy reusable products if you don't have a washing machine and dryer, or an outside clothes line which is easy for you to reach. Due to their absorbency they take longer to dry than normal underclothes and sheets, so ask for a sample to try first.

WHO PAYS FOR CONTINENCE PRODUCTS?

Continence products can be costly and in most cases you will need to pay for them yourself.

If you have permanent and severe incontinence, and meet other eligibility criteria, the national Continence Aids Payment Scheme can assist you to meet some of the costs of continence products.

The Department of Veterans' Affairs also manages the Rehabilitation Appliances Program which you may access if you hold a Gold Card or eligible White Card.

Also, some state and territory governments provide services to support people affected by incontinence, including providing continence products. These services vary between states, and may include client assessment, education and support.



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In most cases you will need to seek help from a health professional such as your doctor or continence nurse to access these services.

If you contact the National Continence Helpline you can get advice about the continence services that may be available for you.

SEEK HELP

You are not alone. Poor bladder control can be managed better if treated. If you do nothing it might get worse.

If you have any questions about bladder or bowel control, you can contact:

Expert Advisors on the National Continence Helpline for free:

- information;
- advice; and
- leaflets.

On FREECALL 1800 33 00 66 (8 am to 8 pm Monday to Friday), or

Visit the website: www.bladderbowel.gov.au

The Helpline can arrange for an interpreter through the Telephone Interpreter Service (TIS). Please ring 13 14 50 Monday to Friday and ask for the Helpline.

Continence products can help manage bladder and bowel control problems.

* Calls from mobile telephones are charged at applicable rates.

