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Continence Care



Most of us take going to the toilet for granted, but think how embarrassed you would feel if you could not get there in time. As we grow older, we may need support to maintain our continence. It is your role to protect each resident's dignity and privacy, and providing good continence care is a key part of this.

CONTINENCE CARE IS A LEGAL REQUIREMENT

Care homes must ensure residents are protected from infections and are provided with the right equipment. *The Health & Social Care Act 2008 (Regulated Activities) Regulations 2014: No 10 Dignity and respect, No 12 Safe care and treatment, No 15 Premises and equipment.*

It's just part of getting old – isn't it?

Incontinence is often seen as an inevitable consequence of ageing. But is it?

Residents will have moved into a care home because of increased frailty, physiological or psychological problems. Many of these disabilities will have an impact on the support needed to maintain their continence. However there is growing evidence that poor provision of toilet facilities, lack of assessment, training and care can lead to residents being seen incorrectly as being incontinent.

Assessment and advice

Your local NHS has a bladder and bowel service which can provide specialist advice and carry out assessments. The Bladder and Bowel Foundation also offers advice and support. Medication or a temporary illness may change a person's condition and it is important to reassess their continence needs as health changes. Good care, proper equipment and facilities and emotional support are critical in helping to restore confidence and continence.

Practical support

Let's talk

It's hard to talk about continence. Many older people try to conceal it, avoid mentioning it or refuse to discuss the issue. It is a private matter, so find out and discuss in private with the resident what is available to them to manage their continence.

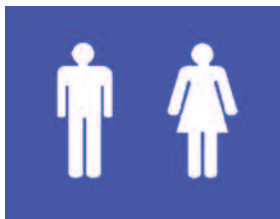
When you help with a resident's personal care, respect their modesty, ask permission and explain what you need to do to support them.

For a carer to be the same sex as the resident may prevent embarrassment.

The toilet

People with dementia may need reminding where the toilets are and it helps to have clear signs on the doors.

Help a person to use a toilet where they can, rather than require them to wear incontinence pads or use a commode. They may need help with zips



GOOD PRACTICE

Ethel couldn't find the toilet. She was agitated and Ella and Tom had had enough of her bursting into their rooms looking for it. Staff and residents agreed on clear, bright picture signs to make it clear and help everybody.

Keynotes



ASSESSMENT FOR PAMELA

Sarah noticed Pamela's reliance on laxatives. She asked for an assessment from the continence nurse, who suggested increasing Pamela's fluid and fibre diet and her visits to the toilet. She also recommended a review of Pamela's medication, as the codeine in her painkillers could be aggravating the problem.

or buttons, or to have clothing that is easy to manage. Respect their privacy, close doors, don't hurry them and never leave them stranded. Always remember hand washing after using the toilet or commode.

A pressure sensor under a mat by the bed can alert staff to someone getting up to use the toilet who might be in danger of falling.

Assessment and Review

Pads or catheters are not treatments but simply containment, only to be used following the assessment of a continence nurse.

Long term, unmonitored use of pads or catheters can lead to serious health problems, including painful and uncomfortable skin sores and infections. Their use should be subject to regular review.

Leaving people in wet or soiled pads increases all these risks, as well as discomfort, smell and serious loss of dignity.

Rapid response

Respond quickly to call bells or requests for help to avoid a person having an accident which will be embarrassing for them and creates more work for carers.

Are toilets close enough to their room for those with mobility problems to reach or should a commode be provided?

Sensors on a mattress can tell staff when a resident is wet and needs changing, rather than routine invasive checks throughout the night.

Health checks

Keep fresh water handy and encourage people to drink, as dehydration can cause constipation, urinary infections, confusion and falls.

Diet makes a difference. For someone suffering from constipation, eating more fruit and vegetables could be a better option than laxatives.

Monitor the use of laxatives and seek medical advice and review of a person's medication if constipation or diarrhoea continue.

Be alert to changes in a person's routines. Ask for a review of their continence needs and the best way to support them.

TOO SOON

Research by the Department of Health found that introducing incontinence pads too early often led to people becoming psychologically dependent on them and less able to regain control.



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