

# A guide to disposable products to contain incontinence in children



Continence products are absorbent pads or underwear designed to contain urine (wee) and/or faeces (poo) in people who are not able to get to the toilet either some or all of the time. There are many different sizes, shapes and makes of product available. Some are disposable (designed to be used once then thrown away), others are washable (designed to be cleaned, dried and reused).

This information is about disposable products. Products to contain incontinence are usually called continence containment products, nappies, pads, or products. In this leaflet they will be referred to as products.

## Where can I buy products?

Products are available to buy from most supermarkets, chemist shops, disability shops as well as online. They are available from the Bladder & Bowel UK shop. Some online suppliers will provide a limited number of free samples.

## Are products available free of charge?

Products may be available from the NHS to children from their fifth birthday, depending on local policies if

- They have additional needs, AND
- They have had a specialist assessment of their bladder and bowel health, AND
- They have undergone a toilet training programme, supported by a healthcare professional with specialist knowledge for at least six months, AND
- They have been assessed as unable to toilet train within six months of their assessment and toilet training programme

Products are not available to children with treatable conditions, even if the child has a disability or additional need. Most bladder and bowel issues are treatable, including in children with additional needs. Many children with learning disabilities can be toilet trained at the same age as their typically developing peers, although this may take longer and they may need more support. There is information about toilet training on the Bladder & Bowel UK website at <https://www.bbuk.org.uk/children-young-people/resources-for-children/>

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Bedwetting, daytime wetting, constipation and soiling are all treatable conditions. Therefore, products are not provided for these, but children should be offered treatment.

Children who are not able to be continent due differences to their bladder and bowel anatomy, as a result of a problem they were born with, or that has developed due to illness or an accident, may be provided with products without undergoing a toilet training programme, depending on local policies and procedures.

## How do I find out if my child should be given products by the NHS?

If you think your child may be entitled to have products provided for them, speak to their health visitor or school nurse. They will know who should do the assessment for children's bladder and bowel health in your area. All children should have an assessment before products are provided, to make sure that children do as well as they can with toilet training and that their bladder and bowel is healthy.

## What type of product will be provided?

Your child should be provided with a product that meets their assessed needs. In some cases they will be offered a different product for overnight to the one they are given during the day. For the smallest children the product provided will often be a nappy. As they grow they may continue to be offered a similar style of product.

For many children, once they outgrow a nappy-style product, they will be offered a two-piece product. These consist of an absorbent pad, that is very similar to the main part of the nappy, with a pair of pants (known as fixation pants) to keep it in place. These are as effective as the one-piece product for many children and young people, but are more discrete under clothing and easier to change in those children and young people who are mobile.

Pull ups or disposable pant style products are not usually provided. This is because they are not helpful for toilet training and are often not as absorbent as other one-piece and two-piece products.

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## What will happen if products are provided?

This will vary slightly according to where you live and local policy.

What is provided will depend on what the assessment of your child has shown. However, once the decision is made by the healthcare professional that your child does need products, they should provide you with samples. The samples will be of a product or products that are available locally and that should meet your child's need for containment of their incontinence.

When you have tried the samples on your child, you will need to contact the healthcare professional to let them know whether the product worked well. If it did, the healthcare professional will order a supply of products and let you know how and when to get more.

The healthcare professional should show you how to store and apply the product and when to change it. There is also information on how to use products in the Bladder & Bowel UK leaflet 'How to get the best out of your continence products'. Most manufacturers also provide product fitting guides online.

You will be told how many products per day are going to be supplied for your child. The maximum number per day is usually four. Products are usually delivered to home and you will be sent several weeks supply at once.

Your child should have a reassessment of their bladder and bowel health and their product needs at least once a year, although this will vary slightly depending on local policy.

## I keep running out of products – can I get more?

Your child should be given sufficient products to meet their assessed needs. Products do not need to be changed as soon as your child has passed urine, as they are designed to keep the top layer next to your child's skin dry. They should be left on until they are full or nearly full.

For more information on when to change the product see the Bladder & Bowel UK leaflet 'How to get the best out of your continence products'. If other people look after your child some of the time, make sure they understand when the product should be changed.

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If you are running out of products regularly, speak to your child's healthcare professional. They may be able to reassess your child's needs or provide a product that needs changing less often.

If you need to purchase extra products for your child, your healthcare professional will be able to tell you where to get these. Products are available to purchase online from most of the companies that supply the NHS. They are also available from disability shops including the Bladder & Bowel UK shop. Supermarkets and chemist shops also sell some products.

## My child has grown, or the product no longer works well for them

If your child grows or the products start to leak regularly, then contact their healthcare professional. You should try to do this about six to eight weeks before their next delivery is due. This allows time for an assessment to be done, samples of a different product to be tried and a decision made about which product will be best for your child now.

In most areas, once a delivery has been made the product cannot be changed before the next delivery.

## What should I do with products that my child no longer needs?

Products are provided by the NHS on a named person basis. They should be used for that person only and not be given to or sold to anyone else. Most areas will arrange a collection of any unused products that are no longer needed.

Contact your child's healthcare professional to find out what the local arrangements are.

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## Further information

Find more information about child bladder and bowel health in our information library at [www.bbuk.org.uk](http://www.bbuk.org.uk). You can also contact the **Bladder & Bowel UK** confidential helpline (0161 214 4591).

For further advice on bladder and bowel problems speak to your GP or other healthcare professional.

There is also information about bedwetting at [www.stopbedwetting.org](http://www.stopbedwetting.org).

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