

Good Continence Care: empowering you to improve your health

Living with incontinence can be challenging, but with the right support, you can take control and improve your quality of life. Good continence care is about more than managing symptoms. It is about empowering you to make informed choices, build confidence, and feel supported every step of the way.

Your role in continence care is central to achieving successful outcomes. Active participation is essential for accurate assessment, effective treatment/management, and maintaining dignity and quality of life. Continence care should be about you, person centred, not just task oriented.

Your healthcare provider's commitment to you

Person centred care: Your health care provider will develop care plans reflecting your individual preferences, not just needs, involving you in choices about products, routines, and support.

Dignity & respect: Using sensitive, non-judgmental language, ensuring your privacy during care, and always being treated with empathy, making you feel safe and understood. You play an active role in maintaining your own dignity by expressing preferences for care. You should be encouraged to be as independent as possible in self-care and toileting, which improves your mental health, quality of life, and physical function.

Information & education: Provide clear, accessible information about causes, management options (lifestyle, exercises, products), and available support.

Self-Management Support: Encourage you to become empowered to adopt lifestyle changes (diet, fluid intake, smoking cessation) and learn exercises (like pelvic floor) to manage symptoms. Maintaining a healthy weight, adjusting fluid intake (avoiding excessive caffeine or alcohol), and eating a high-fiber diet to prevent constipation.

Choice & involvement: Offer choices, even if it's declining interventions, that involve you in decision-making to foster a sense of control. You have the right to be informed about all available treatment and management options (conservative measures, medication, products, surgery) and to express your preferences. This empowers you to choose solutions that align with your personal goals and quality of life.

Provision of appropriate aids: Adapt bathrooms (seats, handheld showers) and use containment products wisely, ensuring they support your independence, not just management.

Digital tools & communication: Utilise technology for better care planning, monitoring, and support.

Focus on strengths: Highlight your abilities and encourage participation in care, supporting an active, independent life.

Seeking help and open communication

Incontinence is not a normal part of ageing and is often treatable or manageable. It is essential to overcome potential embarrassment and seek medical advice promptly. Openly discussing symptoms, medical history, and personal preferences with healthcare professionals (GPs, specialist nurses, physiotherapists) is crucial for an accurate diagnosis and appropriate care plan.

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By actively engaging in your care, you can significantly improve your symptoms, prevent complications like skin damage or infections, and enhance your overall well-being.

- Ask questions and share your concerns.
- Use available tools and resources. For more information, support, and practical tools, we invite you to visit the Bladder and Bowel UK Hub: [Uncovering pathways in bladder and bowel continence care](#).
- Take an active role in decisions about your care.

Empowerment starts with information, support, and partnership. It is essential to explore all the resources available and take the next step towards better continence care today.

The Association for Continence Professionals (ACP) and the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) (2023) highlighted that all health professionals are responsible for identifying and supporting people with continence issues, not only those who work in bladder and bowel care. This reinforces the need for collaboration between everyone involved in patient care.

References

Commented [AV4]: mention the BBUK Incontinence Hub as a go-to resource for information, support, and empowerment. Association for Continence Professionals, Royal College of Nursing (2023)

Guidance for the Provision of Absorbent Products for Adult Incontinence. A Consensus Document 2023. ACP and RCN.

Further information

Find more information about bladder and bowel health in our information library at 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. This leaflet can be freely downloaded and printed as a whole. However, no part of this document may be copied or distributed without the authors' permission.

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