

This Weeks Topic



Understanding Incontinence in People Living with Dementia

Over the last few weeks supporting people in the community and care homes people have asked for different topics to be covered if you have something you would like to ask please email me and I will add it to the list.

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Understanding Incontinence in People Living with Dementia

People living with dementia face the same risk of developing incontinence as they grow older as the general population. The two main predictors of incontinence in dementia patients are the degree of immobility and severity of cognitive impairment.

The physiological function of the bladder and bowel is reliant on several areas of the brain including the cortex, pons, basal ganglia, cerebellum, and brainstem.

To remain continent and toilet appropriately, people require several interrelated cognitive and physical skills. This chain can be broken at any time due to disease, disability, environmental events and individual thoughts and beliefs, or a mixture of all of these.

For people living with dementia this can be associated with the unwillingness to use the toilet, visual impairment “can they see the toilet” of course not forgetting cognitive decline “understanding what a toilet is for”.

Poor mobility can out way cognitive decline which means for many people they could remain continent if their mobility function were intact.

We tend to take finding the toilet for granted but very likely we have all experienced the stress and anxiety that this can cause when we cannot locate a toilet in time. When a person living with dementia experiences this the frustration is heightened and can cause a stressful situation for them.

The Emotional Effect

For the person living with dementia this can be a very distressing experience. They might feel embarrassed, frustrated or in some cases quite angry with themselves which in turn turns into a difficult situation. It's a loss of control and sometimes they may attempt to hide the fact they may have had an accident, this may show in hiding soiled clothes or laying them out to dry on the radiator is common along with putting them at the back of a draw as not to be seen.

For the carer often the first experience is quite a shock and this can be upsetting and you might feel embarrassed depending on when and where. The carer may be angry as perhaps you may have asked several times if they wanted to go to the toilet and had a "no" reply. Often daughters feel very sad that their mum is having to experience such indignity.

Its Happened We Need to Deal with It

It is very important that we try to remember that this is not the persons fault and in many situations a side-effect of the dementia.

Your patience is key in this situation. Getting angry and shouting or raising your voice will only create even more of an issue.

We need to adopt a practical matter of fact attitude and try to overcome any embarrassment that they may be feeling, its hard sometimes to do this when perhaps you are tired but try to remember that the way you deal with situations makes a real difference.

What we need to do is boost confidence to help with independence and while doing this we will maintain dignity and respect.

My Four P's are:

Plan Ahead - If you are going out check out the facilities before hand build in enough time to allow for a few trips so as not to rush the person.

Prepare - Have ready at home incontinence pads or adult pull ups try to ensure choosing the right size if you buy them too big they will leak. Ladies do favour the pull ups as they are very similar to knickers. It is worth trying these in advance if you are planning a trip or going out somewhere unusual to them.

Incontinence products are for accidents not to be used as a toilet.

One thing that will cause agitation with a person living with dementia is being wet.

Prevent - As the dementia progresses the verbal communication changes and it becomes much more difficult so it can be important to understand the person's body language:

They may start to pull at clothes, fidget, pace up and down or even start to take their clothes off. Approximately every 2 hours a person even with a strong bladder may need to go to the loo.

I strongly recommend if you like to get out a lot on journeys buying a **RADAR KEY** this allows you to open approximately 9000 accessible toilets around the UK.

Don't Panic - There are going to be accidents, please remember it isn't their fault, if they are wearing a pad the situation can be rectified easily it doesn't have to spoil your day out.

Now we need to reassure that it is ok use terminology such as "its ok no harm done", "accidents happen not to worry".

If able to do so choose the disabled toilet as it will give you more room to manoeuvre as well as at the same time being calm and reassuring them that its not their fault.

Useful to Have



£3.95

<https://www.ageukincontinence.co.uk/catalogsearch/result/?q=radar>

The region list should you require one can be bought from here for £3.50

<https://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/shop/radar-key-region-list-radar-key-not-included>

or you can download an app

<https://www.toiletmap.org.uk/>

Toilet Finder



This one is free, but you may have to make a donation it varies mine still hasn't arrived yet.

Info@disabledliving.co.uk

Why do we use coloured toilet seats?

As the dementia progresses often for some people colour becomes important especially if they already have a visual impairment.

Examples of not being able to use the toilet are when perhaps a gentleman pees in the sink, the bath or the bin if the suite is all white and the tiles are a similar colour and there is no real contrast between anything then this is quite normal he may think that the sink is a urinal for instance.

Many ladies get frustrated when the urine is all over the floor or around the toilet seat but, if they cannot see the toilet clearly then accidents will happen. Remember it is not their fault.

Some may experience a lady going in the bin or a corner of a room or a receptacle that they can see, again this is perhaps that they are now unable to see the toilet.

If you are starting to have perception problems again you are often not able to see the toilet or you might think that the person helping you is asking you to sit on to nothing.

That is why using a blue or red toilet seat can really help the situation. For some people it makes a huge difference straight away and for others useful a bit further down the line.

Many people living in their own homes are reluctant to change the seat or put signage up but I can tell you that this will help the person living with dementia to orientate, reduce stress for them and for the caregiver.

You can also now purchase toilet raisers and frames along with seats in blue or red, I favour the blue seat but you can use either.

I would strongly suggest that you purchase a reasonable seat as the cheaper ones tend to move.

Please contact me should you want to know the best ones to look at.



Case Study 1

The use of contrasting colours can help draw attention to something that is important. Once this seat went on to this toilet the person had a visual clue as to where aim as you can see the rest of the area is almost all the same colour now imagine a white seat instead of blue one there would be little or no contrast for the person.

Case Study 2

Prior to Mrs C using a coloured seat and signage Mr C was very disorientated in the home often going into the bedroom thinking it was the bathroom, urinating in draws or even in the hallway. A blue seat was fitted and the signage below was printed off and placed on the toilet door, within a few days Mr C was able to easily orientate to the bathroom and could see the toilet therefore reducing the accidents that were happening prior to this. Mrs C is much happier and far less stressed.



You may not require signage in the home at this time but as the dementia progresses for many finding their way in their own home can be a challenge. Good clear signage is very helpful. This sign here is a typical FREE download which you can print and laminate pop on the door using white tack (no damage).

https://www.pinpng.com/picture/TihRxx_door-signs-toilet-signs-for-dementia-patients-hd/

Night Light

This has helped so many people I know not just in the community but in many care homes too.

Often a person will forget to turn on the light this gadget runs on batteries and is on a motion sensor – you do not have to have blue there are about on most 10 different coloured options.

I favour this one purely as the rod that goes into the toilet bowl is adjustable so fits almost any toilet.



<https://www.sakertool.co.uk/products/hirundo-16-color-motion-sensor-led-toilet-night-light?variant=32906782965897>



Toilet Raiser and frame



Raised toilet seat