



Care Partner Information

Tips for Providing Older Adult Care

Losing Control of Urine

Losing control of urine is called incontinence (in-con-tin-ents). It is common when people have dementia. It often gets worse as dementia gets worse.

Sometimes people with dementia wet their pants and feel bad about it. It is important to help them stay dry so they feel better about themselves.

Later, when dementia is worse, they may wet their pants and not even know they did. It is still important to help them stay dry to prevent sores on the skin.

For clothes. Consider using “adult briefs.” They are special underpants for people who leak urine. They have special pads inside. You can throw away the pads when they are wet.

For the bed. Place a plastic pad and an absorbent pad on the bed, and cover it with a folded sheet. If the person wets the bed, change the folded sheet and the pads.

Some Causes of Losing Urine that Can Sometimes be Fixed		
Urinary tract infection	Drinking too much caffeine	Diabetes out of control
Medicine side effects	Severe constipation	Large prostate gland

Losing Control of Urine Can Sometimes be Fixed

If losing urine is a new problem, make a doctor’s appointment for a check up. Sometimes there are causes that can be fixed or helped.

Why Do People with Dementia Lose Control of Urine?

People with dementia often don’t know until the last minute that they need to use the bathroom. Then, when they suddenly have to go, they can’t get to the bathroom quickly enough or they can’t find the bathroom.

Sometimes they can find the bathroom but have trouble pulling down their pants. Other times they don’t even realize they have to use the bathroom and just wet their pants.

This Care Partner Information page is part of a series on older adult caregiving tips. They are written to help family and community caregivers, direct care workers and community health representatives care for older adults. Available in English and Spanish at www.aging.arizona.edu

Help prevent losing urine

The table below lists some things you can try to help prevent someone from losing urine. Give them a try and see how they work. Also, don't be afraid to let the person drink as much liquid as they want during the day. Only limit liquids after dinner before bed.

What To Do If the Person Can't Get To The Bathroom On Time

- Keep a clear path to the bathroom with nothing in the way.
- Be sure hallway is well lit.
- Put up signs in the hall that point to the bathroom.
- Provide clothes that are easy to remove.

What To Do If the Person Doesn't Even Try To Get To The Bathroom

Try asking about the bathroom

- Every 2 hours, ask them if they need to go to the bathroom.
- If they say yes, bring them to the bathroom and help them.
- If they say no, come back and ask again in a few minutes, and then again in 1 or 2 hours.

If that doesn't work, try bringing them to the bathroom

- Bring them to the bathroom every 2-3 hours.
- If they are already wet when you bring them to the bathroom, next time bring them sooner than 2-3 hours.
- Use shorter and shorter intervals till you get them to the bathroom before they are wet.

Useful Websites

Alzheimer's Association:

<https://www.alz.org/help-support/caregiving/daily-care/incontinence>

National Institutes on Aging:

<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/urinary-incontinence-older-adults>

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Alzheimer's disease and Related Dementia ~ Care Partner Information

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