

# Continence care during a hospital stay

## Adult Continence Service

Information for Patients

Produced: January 2022

Review: January 2025

Leaflet number: 1266 Version: 2

### What is incontinence?

Incontinence is not being able to control your bladder or bowel, so you accidentally lose urine from the bladder (urinary incontinence) or faeces from the bowel (bowel incontinence).

People often think that being incontinent when you are older is normal. **This is not the case.** Incontinence can occur at any age and if you are older your bladder capacity may have reduced and muscles weaken, but you should still be in control.

There is always a cause for your incontinence, which can be simple or complex. Many types of incontinence can be cured or improved with just simple lifestyle changes.

### What happens if I am incontinent while in hospital?

If you become incontinent whilst in hospital, this may be because you are not well and may resolve after a few days. If it does not resolve or you have had a problem controlling your bladder or bowel for some time, the ward can provide you with a basic continence assessment. If needed, they can refer you to the hospital Continence Team for a full assessment and treatment whilst you are in hospital if possible.

Don't be afraid to ask for help in using the toilet, and ask as soon as you get the urge; don't leave it too long. The nurses are here to help.

**Health information and support is available at [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)  
or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice**

Visit [www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk](http://www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk) for maps and information about visiting Leicester's Hospitals  
To give feedback about this information sheet, contact [InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk](mailto:InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk)

## How can incontinence products help me?

### Incontinence pads:

If you are suffering bladder or bowel leakages, you may need to wear an incontinence pad to protect your skin. Wearing a pad should not take the place of using a toilet, commode, urinal or bedpan. For patient dignity and to promote independence, we use a range of pads with different absorbencies. They are designed to absorb urine quickly, store it inside the pad and keep it “locked” away from the skin.

Having the lowest absorbency pad to meet your needs is important; if the absorbency is too high or pads are changed before they are full, the pad starts to absorb moisture from the skin, causing the skin to become dry and irritated. The pads have a yellow wetness indicator which turns blue when in contact with moisture. The time to change the pad is when this yellow indicator turns 3/4 blue.

There isn't any pad available that can absorb faeces so it is important to change the pad immediately if any faecal incontinence occurs.

Most of the pads used at Leicester's hospitals are a 2 piece system, where a disposable pad is worn with close-fitting net pants. To reduce leakage the pads need to be worn very close to the body, which is achieved by using the correct size net pants and making sure that the pad is applied correctly. Using your own underwear is only advisable if you are using small pads with an adhesive strip; but they need to be close-fitting. Wearing loose fitting underwear or boxer shorts could cause the pad to leak.

If you are unsure about the correct absorbency to meet your needs or wish to be shown how to fit your pad correctly, speak to your nurse on the ward.

### Other products:

- For men in hospital, a penile sheath is available if suitable. This is an external device where the urine is collected in a bag, which you may prefer rather than using pads. You will be given a 3 day supply on discharge if needed. Further supplies can be arranged via your GP. Ask your nurse for more information.
- For women in hospital, an external catheter is available called Purewick. This can be used instead of a pad to manage urinary incontinence and helps to prevent skin damage due to leaking urine. This is only available while you are in hospital.

If you are interested in managing your incontinence at home using alternative methods, ask to be referred to the hospital Continence Team where a continence nurse specialist will be able to give you more information.

There are many more products available from the community continence service for managing urinary incontinence, for both men and women.

## Taking care of your skin

If you are incontinent, good skin care is important to prevent skin problems. Skin has a natural acid barrier which protects the skin. However, constant contact with urine or faeces can cause the skin to break down. Frequent washing with soap and water can also cause break down of the acid barrier of the skin (skin excoriation) and moisture lesions. If you are experiencing any problems with your skin please speak to your nurse.

In hospital we use special continence wipes which contain cleanser, moisturiser and barrier cream. These replace the need for soap, water and towels, and therefore reduce the risk of skin break down in incontinence. At home you could use mild unscented soap and water, rinse and then gently pat the skin dry with a soft towel. Alternatively, continence skin hygiene products are available from pharmacies.

To protect the skin, applying a barrier moisturising cream is also important. Avoid the use of oil based creams and applying talcum powder below the waist. Both of these can “clog” up the pores of a pad, affecting its ability to absorb urine.

## Where can I get incontinence products after leaving hospital?

If you were receiving incontinence pads from the community home delivery service before your admission, you should continue to receive these and can reorder more on 0800 030 4466. **Please be aware that the pads used in our hospitals may differ from those available from the community service.**

If you have only just started using incontinence pads on this hospital admission (with the exception of end of life care) the following should happen:

- You will get a 3 day supply of incontinence pads (or other product started on the ward e.g. penial sheath or catheter pack) from your ward.

- The hospital Continence Team does not prescribe incontinence pads. If needed, the ward will refer you to the Community Continence Service via the Single Point of Access (SPA) for a continence assessment. If eligible you will get a free prescription of pads as part of your treatment programme.
- You will be contacted by phone or letter to organise this continence assessment with the community continence team. Please be aware that there is a waiting list, and in the interim period you will need to purchase your own pads. These can be purchased online, from a supermarket, or from a pharmacy. Ask your ward nurse for advice.

For end of life care, any incontinence products needed for and after discharge will be arranged as part of your discharge plan.

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی اور زبان میں درکار ہیں، تو براہ کرم مندرجہ ذیل نمبر پر ٹیلی فون کریں۔  
على هذه المعلومات بلغة أخرى، الرجاء الاتصال على رقم الهاتف الذي يظهر في الأسفل

જો તમને અન્ય ભાષામાં આ માહિતી જોઈતી હોય, તો નીચે આપેલ નંબર પર કૃપા કરી ટેલિફોન કરો

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਸਿ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ, ਤਾਂ ਕਰਿਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਹੇਠਾਂ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਗਏ ਨੰਬਰ 'ਤੇ ਟੈਲੀਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ।

Aby uzyskać informacje w innym języku, proszę zadzwonić pod podany niżej numer telefonu

If you would like this information in another language or format such as EasyRead or Braille, please telephone 0116 250 2959 or email [equality@uhl-tr.nhs.uk](mailto:equality@uhl-tr.nhs.uk)