

About Incontinence

What is Incontinence?

Incontinence is the involuntary loss of bladder or bowel control. People with incontinence shouldn't feel embarrassed or alone. It affects approximately 2.3 million men and women of all ages in Australia and New Zealand.¹

It is not a disease, or an inevitable part of growing older, or something that should be accepted after childbirth. Incontinence is a physical condition and is always a symptom or side effect of another medical condition.

Once the cause is understood it can often be cured, and it can always be managed.

Who is at risk?

Nearly one in ten people in Australia is affected by urinary incontinence. It has no boundary of ethnicity, sex, age or social class.²

It affects people socially, emotionally, physically, psychologically and economically.

Women are more likely to be affected than men. In older age groups, incontinence tends to be both more common and more severe, occurring in up to 40% of people over 75 years of age.

Bedwetting is also common in children and teenagers leading to a great deal of embarrassment and stress for the child and their family.

How do you know?

If you are not sure whether you have a problem, ask the following questions. If you answer yes to any of these it's important to take action now.

Do you often...

- Go to the toilet more than six times each day?
- Get up more than once during the night?
- Feel a sudden urge to go to the toilet, and sometimes not able to control it enough to get there?
- Have wet or damp underwear?
- Find urination painful or difficult?
- Have leakage when you laugh, sneeze or cough?

Health professionals are well qualified to assess incontinence and offer numerous treatment options including bladder training, muscle strengthening exercises, dietary modification, medication or surgery.

Today, clinics and treatment centres throughout the nation are helping people to manage and treat incontinence. Increased awareness has helped promote a greater understanding of incontinence in today's society. People with incontinence lead full, active lives doing the same things they have enjoyed for years.

1. P. Chiarelli, W. Bower, A. Wilson, D. Sibbrit. The Prevalence of Urinary Incontinence Within the Community: A Systematic Review. New Zealand Continence Association Inc.

2. The Australian National Continence Management Strategy

