

Geriatrics

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Incontinence and dementia

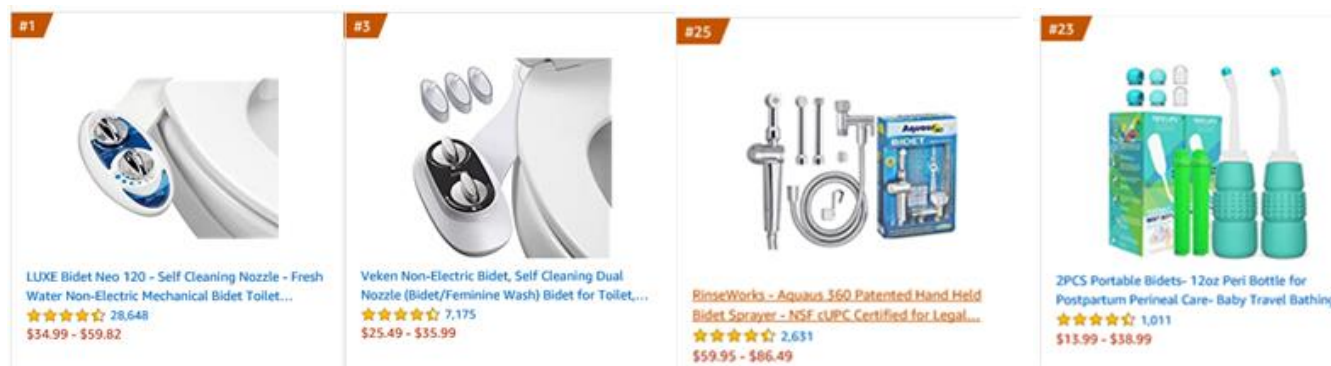
Talk to the physician to see if medication, enlarged prostate or a urinary tract infection might be causing the problem, especially if there is a sudden onset of incontinence.

- Investigate various incontinence supplies. There are many kinds of pads and underwear. Each person will have different needs and different products will work best for each one. A pad inside pull up underwear will provide increased absorption. Do not call them adult diapers, but rather protective underwear.
- People with dementia often resist wearing protective underwear. Some tricks might help, for example, incorporate the underpants as a natural part of getting dressed in the morning. Have pads in the underpants before handing them to your loved one when they are dressing or getting up from the toilet. If your loved one expresses resistance you could say to them, “This will help me to better care for you, because then I won’t have to worry,” or by saying, “This will help you because then you won’t have to rush to the bathroom and risk a fall.”
- Use rubber or disposable plastic protection pads for beds, chairs, car seats, etc.



- Do not shame a person. They did not do it intentionally and may become embarrassed. Call it an accident and be matter of fact and reassuring about whatever happens.
- When going out, carry a change of protective underwear as well as a change of clothes, in case there is a problem. Search for places with family restrooms so that you can take the person to the bathroom that has more privacy especially if you are caring for someone of the opposite sex. It is easier to change a woman with a skirt or dress than if wearing pants.

- Use disposable gloves and flushable wipes if you are helping the person discard soiled adult pad/panty or change into clean clothing. There are odor-neutralizing sprays that are helpful.
- Install a bidet device on your toilet at home to help with cleaning. Below are some examples including a simple bottle device which can be filled with warm water. Dry area after rinsing.



- Have a container to put soiled pads or protective underwear next to the toilet. This will help you to dispose of them and will be a cue to the person not to put them into the toilet.
- If someone has bowel incontinence, it might be necessary to give him/her a shower. Follow the rules on the Bathing Tip sheet to make this process easier. Whenever you or the person with dementia comes in contact with urine or feces, it is important to wash your hands and their hands with soap and water or use gloves as appropriate.
- Have all the things you need at hand in the bathroom, e.g. protective underwear, pads, diaper pail, gloves, wipes, powder, creams/and lotions. You do not want to leave someone sitting on the toilet while you go to another room to get these things.

This Tips for Caregivers sheet was prepared by Family Caregiver Alliance. Funded by the Stavros Niarchos Foundation. © 2012 Family Caregiver Alliance. All rights reserved.