

MoliCare[®]

What to do when wee problems cause big issues

Your guide to incontinence



MoliCare®

If you break your leg, people rally round with casseroles and offers of help. A broken leg is certainly painful and inconvenient – but in a way, it's also straightforward and understandable. Incontinence is quite different. Many people navigate incontinence in silence, sometimes for years, dealing with their embarrassment and distress alone.

Yet help is available. With the right support, you can regain your confidence and reclaim your life.



What is incontinence?

When you're continent, you can control your bladder or bowel movements so that you only pass urine or faeces when you intend to. When you're incontinent, you lose that control and may leak urine or pass faeces involuntarily.¹

Incontinence is not a condition in its own right, though – it is a consequence of something else. Many life events or health problems can lead to continence difficulties, including pregnancy and childbirth, surgery, or chronic conditions like diabetes, Parkinson's disease or stroke.²

Urinary incontinence

If you have urinary incontinence, you may experience accidents ranging from leaking a little bit of urine to completely emptying your bladder.

Symptoms may include:

Needing to pee urgently or frequently

Leaking urine when you laugh, sneeze, cough or exercise

Having a slow flow of urine or dribbling after using the toilet

Straining to pass urine

Feeling like your bladder isn't empty even when you've just been to the toilet

Leaking urine when you're asleep.³

Your bladder's job is to store urine then empty it when your brain perceives it is full. It sounds simple but it actually involves a complex interplay between your brain, nervous system, pelvic organs, pelvic floor muscles and sphincters (valves that open to release urine).⁴

That system can be interrupted by nerve damage, bladder injury or a weakened pelvic floor.

Age, surgery, childbirth or a number of health conditions can lead to urinary incontinence.

There are several types of urinary incontinence, including:

Stress incontinence

Leaking small amounts of urine when you cough, sneeze, laugh or play sport (the extra pressure inside your abdomen presses on your bladder).

Urge incontinence

A frequent, desperate need to pee because you perceive your bladder as being full even when it isn't.

Overflow incontinence

Your bladder doesn't empty properly so you continue to leak urine, possibly due to an enlarged prostate, a blocked urethra or damage to the nerves around your bladder or pelvic floor muscles.

Functional incontinence

Other health conditions or disabilities prevent you getting to the toilet in time or communicating that you need to go.

The right treatment for urinary incontinence depends upon the underlying cause.

Treatment may include:

- Physiotherapy to strengthen your pelvic floor muscles
- Bladder training exercises
- Medication to relax bladder muscles and so relieve urge incontinence
- Lifestyle changes such as quitting smoking, losing weight, and cutting back on alcohol and caffeine.

Faecal incontinence

Faecal incontinence refers to the inability to control your bowel movements.

You may:

- Experience a sudden, uncontrollable urge to poo
- Pass more gas – and sometimes find that your underwear is stained or smeared
- Soil yourself because you didn't realise you needed the toilet or couldn't get there in time
- Feel bloated or have constipation or diarrhoea.⁵

Faecal incontinence can be caused or worsened by:

- Bowel conditions like coeliac disease, Crohn's disease, irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) or severe piles (haemorrhoids)
- Nerve damage due to conditions like multiple sclerosis or Parkinson's disease
- Childbirth or surgery affecting the muscles or nerves that control your bowels
- Conditions like diabetes, stroke or spina bifida that harm the nerves controlling your bowels
- The muscles around your rectum weakening due to age, childbirth, surgery or radiation therapy
- Long-term straining as a result of constipation
- Weakened pelvic floor muscles due to heavy lifting or pregnancy
- Some medications.^{6,7}

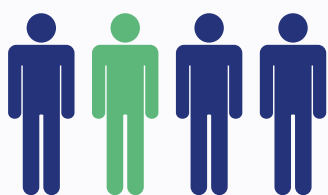
There are treatments for faecal incontinence. Once you and your doctor know the underlying cause, you can explore treatment options such as:

- Medication
- Dietary changes
- Pelvic floor exercises
- Bowel retraining programs.⁸



Living with incontinence

Incontinence is a challenging condition to live with. And the stigma makes it even worse.



It's estimated that
1 in 4
Australian
adults
are incontinent.⁹

That's a quarter of your colleagues,
friends and family members.

Very few people share openly about it though. Friends and family are left to wonder why Bob doesn't play golf anymore, why Shirley doesn't pick up the grandchildren these days or why Erica keeps dashing out of meetings.

In fact, only 30% of incontinent people seek help.¹⁰ To put it another way, 7 out of 10 people try to manage their incontinence without professional help.

If you're like many people with incontinence, you may try to manage it privately by:

- Cutting back on fluids so you don't need the toilet so much
- Staying home more and more to avoid embarrassment and to ensure you're always near a toilet
- Using sanitary pads designed for periods.

These are common behaviours among people with incontinence. But they're not lasting solutions.

You need an appropriate fluid intake to prevent dehydration, which can lead to symptoms such as headaches and feeling light-headed, irritable, drowsy or confused. In cases of severe dehydration, complications can also affect your kidneys, heart, brain and blood vessels.¹¹

You need to get out of the house to nurture relationships and maintain your mental health. You need an absorbent product – but not one designed for menstrual blood.

Eventually, you realise how much your quality of life has declined due to incontinence. You're tired of washing soiled clothes and bedsheets, of staying in when you'd rather go out, and of having sore, inflamed skin irritated by regular exposure to urine or faeces. Your frustration with the limited life you're now living overcomes your embarrassment and you finally decide to seek help. But who do you get it from?

Getting help

Incontinence is a common medical problem and there are many healthcare professionals who can offer advice and support.

You could talk to:

The National Continence Helpline on 1800 33 00 66 - this is a free telephone service run by Nurse Continence Specialists who offer a high level of well-informed advice and support

A pharmacist - they can review your medications and help you find suitable continence products

Your GP - they can review your medical history and provide advice and referrals to other providers

A physiotherapist - ideally placed to help you strengthen your pelvic floor, especially after pregnancy and childbirth

Your urologist - specialist advice for men with enlarged prostates or after prostate surgery

You may also be able to access funding to help offset the cost of continence products. Both the Commonwealth and the States offer a range of subsidy schemes including the:

- Continence Aids Payment Scheme (CAPS)
- DVA Rehabilitation Appliances Program (RAP)
- National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).¹²

Supporting skin health with the right products

Maintaining skin health (known as skin integrity) is a crucial part of incontinence care.

Skin is your largest organ and can become irritated and inflamed by contact with urine and faeces, putting you at risk of incontinence-associated dermatitis and infection.¹³ If you're using sanitary products, low-quality incontinence products or an absorbent product that's the wrong size or not sufficient for your needs, you're likely to experience leaks. That can jeopardise your skin. It can also become embarrassing and exhausting – every time you leak, you have to deal with the aftermath of cleaning your body and washing your clothes or bedding (again!).

The right products make a huge difference to your quality of life.

MoliCare®

At MoliCare®, we're big believers in providing incontinence solutions to suit the needs of individuals as well as supporting skin health. Compromised skin needs the right conditions if it is to remain in, or return to, a state of 'integrity'. We call this state Skintegrity and it lies at the heart of everything we do to help those living with incontinence.

When it comes to choosing the right incontinence products, there are three steps that may make the difference between getting to that much loved game of golf or to the movies without worry, or staying at home. They are SAS – style, absorbency and size.



Our product range includes:

- **Pads** – these fit inside your underwear
- **Large Pads** – these are worn with comfortable cotton fixation pants
- **Pull-ups** – worn instead of normal underwear and easily removed by ripping open at the side
- **All-in-ones** – wrap-style pads with re-closable tabs for easy adjustment and best fit.
- **Fixation pants** – comfortable, washable, reusable pants to be used with large incontinence pads
- Men's products designed for the male anatomy, for a secure fit and protection
- Women's products for the female anatomy, to provide a secure fit and protection
- Bed mats and rectangular pads for the protection of bedding and furniture & rectangular pad, suitable for faecal smearing
- A skin care range that cleans, protects and cares for your skin.

We're proud of our extensive range and we recognise that it can be hard to know which products suit you best. If you're not quite sure what you need, try our product finder. It'll ask you a few questions about your needs and then provide a list of recommended products that may help you.

You can even order some free samples so that you can try before you buy – in fact, we strongly encourage you to get different samples so you can find something that suits you.

Restoring confidence, reclaiming life

Once you get the support you need to live well with incontinence, you'll probably find that you become more confident in getting out and about. You'll start saying 'yes' to invitations and enjoy spending time with family and friends again. You'll begin to make plans for the future and look forward to ticking more items off your bucket list.

If you care for someone with incontinence, the right products make your job so much easier.

Pull-ups that rip open at the side lighten the load of undressing a heavy adult. And products of the right style, absorbency and size vastly reduce leaks, meaning there's far less need to change the bedsheets or wash soiled clothes.

You might not be able to get rid of incontinence but you can greatly reduce its impact. Once you do that, life becomes a whole lot better.

Visit [molicare.au](https://www.molicare.au) to learn more.

¹ Continence Foundation of Australia, Understanding Incontinence, <https://www.continence.org.au/incontinence/understanding-incontinence>, [Accessed 17 April 2023]

² Continence Foundation of Australia, Medical Conditions, <https://www.continence.org.au/incontinence/medical-conditions>, [Accessed 17 April 2023]

³ Healthdirect, Urinary Incontinence, <https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/urinary-incontinence>, [Accessed 17 April 2023]

⁴ Johns Hopkins Medicine, Urinary Incontinence, <https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/urinary-incontinence>, [Accessed 17 April 2023]

⁵ NHS Inform, Bowel Incontinence, <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/bowel-incontinence/>, [Accessed 17 April 2023]

⁶ Continence Foundation of Australia, Faecal Incontinence, <https://www.continence.org.au/types-incontinence/faecal-incontinence>, [Accessed 17 April 2023]

⁷ NHS Inform, Bowel Incontinence, <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/bowel-incontinence/>, [Accessed 17 April 2023]

⁸ NHS, Treatment: Bowel Incontinence, <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/bowel-incontinence/treatment/>, [Accessed 17 April 2023]

⁹ Continence Foundation of Australia, Understanding Incontinence, <https://www.continence.org.au/incontinence/understanding-incontinence>, [Accessed 17 April 2023]

¹⁰ Continence Foundation of Australia, Understanding Incontinence, <https://www.continence.org.au/incontinence/understanding-incontinence>, [Accessed 17 April 2023]

¹¹ Health Direct, Dehydration, <https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/dehydration> [Accessed 3 May 2023]

¹² Continence Foundation of Australia, Financial Assistance, <https://www.continence.org.au/get-help/financial-assistance>, [Accessed 17 April 2023]

¹³ DermNet, Incontinence-Associated Dermatitis, <https://dermnetnz.org/topics/incontinence-associated-dermatitis>, [Accessed 17 April 2023]