

First Steps in the Management of Urinary Incontinence in Community-Dwelling Older People

A clinical practice guideline
for primary clinicians
(registered nurses and
allied health professionals)

Third Edition 2010



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Table of Contents

Preface	9
1. Introduction and background	10
1.1 Rationale	10
1.2 Format of this guideline	11
1.3 Levels of evidence used in this guideline	12
1.4 Icons	14
1.5 Glossary of Terms	15
1.6 Prevalence	17
2. Bladder function and urinary incontinence	18
2.1 How the normal bladder works	18
2.2 Established and treatable urinary incontinence	19
3. The impact of ageing on urinary continence	21
4. Factors that contribute to urinary incontinence	24
4.1 Arthritis	24
4.2 Back pain	25
4.3 Bowel problems	25
4.4 Caffeine	25
4.5 Cardiac conditions	26
4.6 Childhood history	26
4.7 Dehydration	27
4.8 Dementia	27
4.9 Diabetes Mellitus	29
4.10 Ethnicity	30
4.11 Frailty	30
4.12 Gynaecological factors	31
4.12.1 Pelvic organ prolapse	31
4.12.2 Gynaecological surgery	32
4.13 Medications	32
4.14 Mobility	36
4.15 Obesity	36
4.16 Oestrogens	40
4.17 Pregnancy and childbirth	41
4.18 Prostate disorders	42
4.18.1 Radical prostatectomy	42
4.19 Psychiatric/Mental health conditions	43
4.19.1 Medications for mental illness that may impact on urinary incontinence	44
4.19.2 Psychogenic polydipsia	44
4.19.3 Toilet facilities and their influence on toileting behaviour	45
4.20 Respiratory disease	45
4.21 Sleep-disordered breathing	46
4.22 Smoking	46
4.23 Stroke/Cerebral vascular accident (CVA)	47

5. Constipation	49
5.1 Risk factors	49
5.1.1 Medications which may cause constipation	49
5.2 Physiological causes	50
5.3 Diagnostic criteria	51
5.4 Dietary fibre and constipation	51
5.5 Probiotics/prebiotics	52
5.6 Assessment of constipation	52
5.6.1 Subjective assessment/history	53
5.6.2 Objective assessment	54
5.6.2.1 Basic objective examination	54
5.6.2.2 Complex objective assessment	56
5.7 Management of constipation	56
5.7.1 Types of constipation	57
5.7.1.1 Acute constipation	57
5.7.1.2 Simple constipation	57
5.7.1.3 Chronic constipation	57
5.7.1.4 Severe constipation leading to faecal impaction	58
5.7.2 The Stepping out of constipation algorithm	58
5.7.2.1 Step one: Fluids, fibre and exercise	60
5.7.2.2 Step two: Bulk forming laxatives	61
5.7.2.3 Step three: Stool softeners	61
5.7.2.4 Step four: Osmotic laxatives	61
5.7.2.5 Step five: Stimulants	61
5.7.2.6 Step six: Suppositories and enemas	61
5.7.2.7 Step seven: Colonic lavage	61
5.7.3 Fluids	62
5.7.4 Fibre	63
5.7.5 Laxatives	66
5.8 Good habits for bowel emptying	73
5.8.1 Timing for bowel emptying	73
5.8.2 Positioning for bowel emptying	74
5.9 Privacy and dignity	75
6. Risk, economic and environmental factors associated with urinary incontinence	76
6.1 Admission to residential care	76
6.2 Carer strain	76
6.3 Depression	76
6.4 Economic impact	77
6.5 Environmental impact	79
6.6 Falls	79
6.7 Presentation to acute care	80
6.8 Reduced fluid intake	80
6.9 Excessive fluid intake	80
6.10 Skin breakdown	81
6.11 Sleep disruption	82
6.12 Social isolation	82

7.	Psychosocial impact of urinary continence	83
7.1	Attitudes to incontinence: impact on help-seeking behaviour	84
7.2	Cultural beliefs	86
7.2.1	Indigenous Australians and incontinence	87
7.2.2	Non-Indigenous Australian culture and incontinence	88
7.3	Family	89
7.4	Sexuality	89
7.5	Quality of Life (QoL)	90
7.5.1	Quality of life assessment tools	91
7.5.1.1	Incontinence Severity Index	92
7.5.1.2	Incontinence Impact Questionnaire – Short Form IIQ-SF7	92
7.5.2	Coping behaviour	93
7.6	Motivation and adherence to treatment programs	93
8.	Health care professionals and urinary incontinence: The challenges	94
8.1	Knowledge and awareness of urinary incontinence	94
8.2	Talking about urinary incontinence	95
8.2.1	Language issues	95
8.2.2	Individual and clinician comfort	95
8.2.3	BATHE technique	96
8.2.4	The PLISSIT model	97
9.	Significant and causative factors related to urinary incontinence in older people	99
9.1	Significant factors and urinary incontinence: Red Flags	99
9.1.1	Pain	99
9.1.2	Recent unexplained weight loss	99
9.1.3	Recent sudden change in bowel habit	99
9.1.4	Pelvic mass	99
9.1.5	Rectal bleeding	100
9.1.6	Persistent diarrhoea	100
9.1.7	Haematuria	100
9.1.8	Recurrent symptomatic urinary tract infection	100
9.1.9	History of pelvic surgery or irradiation	101
9.1.10	Major pelvic organ prolapse	101
9.2	Potentially reversible/treatable causes of urinary incontinence: DIAPPERS	101
9.2.1	Delirium	102
9.2.2	Infection (urinary tract)	102
9.2.3	Atrophic urethritis/vaginitis	104
9.2.4	Psychological	104
9.2.5	Pharmacological	105
9.2.6	Excessive urine output: polyuria, nocturnal polyuria and nocturia	107
9.2.6.1	Polyuria	107
9.2.6.2	Nocturia	107
9.2.6.3	Nocturnal polyuria	109
9.2.7	Restricted mobility	110
9.2.8	Stool impaction	111
9.3	Potentially reversible/treatable causes of urinary incontinence: TOILETED	113
10.	Recommendations for referral pathways	114
10.1	Models of continence care	114
10.2	Clinical algorithm	114
10.3	Indications for referral	115
10.4	Further management	116

11. First steps in the management of urinary incontinence.	118
11.1 Step 1: Establish an appropriate clinical environment	119
11.2 Step 2: Subjective assessment/history	119
11.2.1 Medications.	125
11.2.2 Impact on every day life	125
11.2.3 Motivation and cooperation	125
11.3 Step 3: Objective assessment	126
11.3.1 Psychological/behavioural/cognitive status	126
11.3.2 Physical examination	127
11.3.3 Bladder diary.	127
11.3.3.1 Reasons for use of a bladder diary.	127
11.3.3.2 Information recorded in a bladder diary	127
11.3.3.3 Limitations of the bladder diary	127
11.3.3.4 Time period required.	128
11.3.3.5 Instructions for completing a bladder diary	130
11.3.3.6 Information gained from a bladder diary.	132
11.3.4 Urinalysis.	133
11.4 Step 4: Plan the required interventions	134
11.5 Step 5: Implementation of treatment/management interventions	134
11.5.1 Management of stool impaction	134
11.5.2 Fluids, caffeine, alcohol and carbonated drinks	135
11.5.2.1 Fluids.	135
11.5.2.2 Caffeine	137
11.5.2.3 Alcohol	138
11.5.2.4 Carbonated drinks.	139
11.5.3 Nocturia.	140
11.5.4 Good habits for bladder emptying	140
11.5.4.1 Avoid ‘hovering’	140
11.5.4.2 Positioning for bladder emptying.	141
11.5.5 Exercise	142
11.5.5.1 General	142
11.5.5.2 Verbal instruction of pelvic floor muscle exercises	143
11.5.6 Further management	146
11.5.6.1 Measurement of the post-void residual volume (PVR)	146
11.5.6.2 Conservative and behavioural therapies	146
11.5.6.3 Conservative use of continence aids	146
11.5.6.4 Medications	147
11.5.6.5 Surgery	148
11.5.6.6 Skin care.	150
11.6 Step 6: Evaluate outcomes	151
11.7 Step 7: Review outcomes.	151
11.7.1 Ongoing management	151
11.7.1.1 Personal and environmental factors affecting continence.	154
12. Development of the guideline	160
12.1 Project Team 2010	160
12.2 Additional contributors 2010	160
12.3 Clinical Expert Panel 2010	160
12.4 External reviewers 2007	161
12.5 Search strategy	161
12.6 Updating of the guideline	161
References.	162
Index	175

List of Tables

Table 1: The Scottish Intercollegiate Group Network grading system (SIGN)	13
Table 2: Summary of lower urinary tract symptoms (LUTS).....	20
Table 3: Age related changes that may contribute to urinary incontinence	22
Table 4: Dehydration risks in the elderly.....	27
Table 5: Types of prolapse	31
Table 6: Medications that can cause or aggravate urinary incontinence.....	34
Table 7: BMI categories	37
Table 8: Characteristics of a problem toilet, for people with a psychiatric disorder	45
Table 9: Medications which may cause constipation	49
Table 10: The Rome II criteria for functional constipation.....	51
Table 11: Bowel diary.....	54
Table 12: Food fibre guide	65
Table 13: Class of laxatives and time to effect	67
Table 14: Commonly used laxatives.....	67
Table 15: Potential interactions of laxatives with other medications	72
Table 16: The BATHE technique.....	96
Table 17: The PLISSIT model	98
Table 18: DIAPPERS mnemonic.....	102
Table 19: Risk factors for complicated UTI in women	104
Table 20: Request for home medicines review	106
Table 21: Causes of nocturia, nocturnal polyuria, reduced nocturnal voided volumes and 24 hour polyuria	108
Table 22: Causes of sleep disorder	109
Table 23: TOILETED mnemonic.....	113
Table 24: Explanation of the seven steps of the clinical algorithm	118
Table 25: Clinicians guide to questioning.....	120
Table 26: Bladder diary.....	129
Table 27: Completed bladder diary example	131
Table 28: Fluid Content of various Foods	136
Table 29: Caffeine content in beverages and food	138
Table 30: Key elements of individual assessment for the most appropriate continence product	153
Table 31: Personal and environmental factors affecting continence.....	154

List of Figures

Figure 1: The Bristol Stool Form Scale.....	55
Figure 2: Stepping out of constipation algorithm	59
Figure 3: Good sitting position for bowel emptying.....	74
Figure 4: Impact of stool impaction on the lower urinary tract	112
Figure 5: Proposed clinical algorithm for the care of community-dwelling older people with urinary incontinence	117
Figure 6: Good sitting position for bladder emptying	141
Figure 7: Management of urinary incontinence in frail older persons	149
Figure 8: Types of continence management	151

Preface

Urinary incontinence is a common health problem that affects 3.8 million Australians (Commonwealth of Australia, 2006). In addition to ageing, risk factors associated with urinary incontinence include pregnancy, childbirth, menopause, high body mass index, lower urinary tract symptoms, constipation, mobility impairment, cognitive impairment and specific surgical procedures such as prostatectomy and hysterectomy (K. Moore, Ho, Lapsley et al., 2006).

Urinary incontinence has further social, physical, emotional and environmental implications for an older person's health, as reflected in the number of health conditions associated with incontinence, including dementia, stroke, cardiac disease, respiratory disease, diabetes and various neurological and musculoskeletal conditions. Urinary incontinence contributes to social isolation and depression, and increases the risk of falls and the risk of admission to residential care. It is well documented that urinary incontinence has far reaching implications for clinicians and health care workers in a variety of residential and in-home care locations. The financial impact of urinary and faecal incontinence on the health and residential aged care systems totalled \$1.5 billion in 2003, with \$111.7 million of this spent on continence aids (Commonwealth of Australia, 2006). The economic impact of incontinence on the individual and his/her family is also significant.

In keeping with the Queensland Health Clinical Practice Guideline Development Framework, clinical practice guidelines require ongoing review and updating to ensure current evidence based practice. This is the third edition of the 'First Steps in the Management of Urinary Incontinence in Community-Dwelling Older People: A clinical practice guideline, 2005' which was first printed by the HACC/MASS Continence Project following recommendations in February 2002 from the Statewide HACC Continence Report. This edition comprises a review of available literature, recommendations from the International Continence Society and expert opinion, which have been combined to form the evidence based practice recommendations within this guideline. The guideline has been developed to support Queensland primary level health professionals in undertaking the 'first steps' in the assessment and management of urinary incontinence in community-dwelling older people. Clinical and consumer resources have also been developed to support clinicians using this guideline based on the feedback received from health professionals.

The HACC/MASS Continence Project team are committed to providing ongoing support and evidence based practice to health professionals, to assist in the provision of high quality continence care and to ensure optimum quality of life and improved health outcomes for older people with urinary incontinence. To this end, a second guideline 'Second Steps in the Management of Urinary Incontinence in Community Dwelling Older People: A clinical practice guideline for secondary level clinicians (continence advisors and continence physiotherapists), second edition 2008' has also been developed.

Through using this document to guide clinical practice, and encouraging early intervention in the area of urinary incontinence, clinicians will aim to ensure that fewer older people have reduced participation in the community due to bladder and bowel problems, and that only those with ongoing, untreatable urinary problems are managed by use of continence aids and products.

I recommend this guideline to all health professionals working in the community with older people to assist them in managing urinary continence problems, and to enable these people to enjoy optimum quality of life and improved health outcomes.



Gayle Leggat
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