



## PATIENT / FAMILY TEACHING SHEET

---

### MANAGING BLADDER INCONTINENCE

---

#### What is Bladder Incontinence?

- Loss of bladder control causing loss of urine
- The problem has varying degrees of severity. Some people have only small, minor leaks or dribbles of urine, while others lose large amounts of urine at a time
- Bladder muscles and nerves as well as the brain all work together to control bladder function
  - A problem in any of these areas can result in incontinence
  - Infection, constipation and mobility problems can also cause incontinence
- Urine left on the skin can lead to irritation and odors

#### What can I do to control the urinary leakage?

- Establish a regular pattern of urinating
  - Plan to go to the toilet every two hours during waking hours
- Make it easier to get to the bathroom
  - Move closer to the toilet
  - Use a bedside commode, urinal or bedpan
- Protect your privacy and dignity
- Avoid fluids or foods that contain caffeine (soft drinks, coffee, tea or chocolate)
- Avoid alcohol as it can overstimulate the bladder
- Ask your nurse about
  - Exercises that can help develop more control
  - Medications that may help improve bladder function
  - A catheter to drain the urine from the bladder. Catheters are not right for everyone. They can put you at risk for infection

## What can be done to prevent odor or skin irritation?

- Keep your skin clean and dry
  - Take extra care to wash and dry the area
  - Products are available that can help you feel clean and eliminate odor
  - Use barrier creams to protect your skin from urine
- Use protective products to try to keep clothing dry
  - Your nurse can help you select which type of garment and products would be most helpful for you
  - Change the garment frequently
- Wash your hands before and after care to help prevent infection
- Ask your nurse for things that can further control any odors

## What to discuss with the Hospice and Palliative Nurse?

- Changes in your bladder function
  - Burning, pain or discomfort with urination
  - Changes in the amount, color or odor of urine
- Medications
  - Many medications can cause incontinence
- Skin irritation

You can find other HPNA Patient Teaching Sheets on end-of-life care at <http://www.hpna.org/PatientEducation.asp>.

Approved by the HPNA Education Committee June 2007