

Continence

Fun Facts and points to remember

**1 IN 4
AUSTRALIANS
ARE
INCONTINENT**



What is Incontinence?

Incontinence describes any accidental or involuntary loss of:

- Urine from the bladder – known as urinary incontinence
- Faeces or flatus from the bowel – known as faecal incontinence

Incontinence can range in severity from a small leak to complete loss of bladder or bowel control.

Plenty can be done to improve or in some cases cure incontinence. Changes such as adopting a healthier diet and lifestyle, incorporating regular exercise, and practicing good toilet habits can all lead to improvements. Below are some tips.

Good bladder and bowel habits

[Good bladder habits](#) can help with bladder control. Good bowel habits can also help avoid bowel control issues. Here are some simple things you can do every day to keep your bladder and bowel healthy:

- Drink at least 6 to 8 glasses of water a day
- [Exercise](#) for about 30 minutes most days
- Do your pelvic floor muscle exercises
- Maintain an [ideal body weight](#)
- [Stop smoking](#)
- Eat plenty of [high-fibre foods](#)
- Practice [good toilet habits](#)
- Get help as soon as you think you have a problem

Good toilet habits

Practising good toilet habits helps improve bladder and bowel health. Good toilet habits include:

- Going to the toilet when you get the urge to do a poo
- Using the correct sitting position on the toilet – sit on the toilet, place your elbows on your knees and lean forward. You can also support your feet with a footstool. This helps to fully relax your pelvic floor and muscles around your bottom (anus)
- Avoid being constipated

- Don't go to the toilet 'just in case' – only go when you need to
- See your doctor if you think you have a urinary tract infection (UTI)

Think you might have a continence issue?

If you experience bladder or bowel problems, but are not sure if you should seek help, try this quick quiz. If you answer 'yes' to any of these questions you may have a bladder or bowel control problem.

- Do you sometimes feel you have not completely emptied your bladder?
- Do you rush to use the toilet?
- Are you frequently nervous because you think you might lose control of your bladder or bowel?
- Do you wake up twice or more during the night to go to the toilet?
- Do you sometimes leak before you get to the toilet?
- Do you sometimes leak when you lift something heavy, sneeze, cough or laugh?
- Do you sometimes leak when you exercise or play sport?
- Do you sometimes leak when you change from a seated or lying position to a standing position?
- Do you strain to empty your bowel?
- Do you sometimes soil your underwear?
- Do you plan your daily routine around where the nearest toilet is?

If you think you have a continence issue, talk to your family doctor or contact the National Continence Helpline on 1800 33 00 66 (continence.org.au). The National Continence Helpline is staffed by Nurse Continence Specialists who offer free and confidential information, advice and support. They can also provide you with a wide range of resources and referrals to local services.

www.health.gov.au/health-topics/bladder-and-bowel

www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/continence-aids-payment-scheme-caps
