



Tips for Careworkers: Faecal Incontinence

What it is: Faecal incontinence is the inability to control bowel movements which leads to unexpected leakage of liquid and/or solid stool.

Why it matters: Faecal incontinence is common in older adults. However, it is more common in people with palliative care needs and as a person comes to the end of their life.

Faecal incontinence can affect a person's health, dignity, and independence. It is also a hygiene concern.

Faecal incontinence is a risk factor for pressure injury in frail older adults. The leaking fluids affect the health of skin.

Careworkers are likely to notice if a person experiences faecal incontinence. Together with nursing/supervisory staff they can help manage any concerns and look for signs of new or ongoing needs.

What I need to know: The Bristol Stool Chart can be used to decide if a person's stool is healthy or not.

Food with increased fluid and fibre may be useful.

Consider the person's dignity when helping with toileting and assisting with their continence needs.

Do The person may be unhappy and ashamed about faecal incontinence – be calm and patient with them.

Do Make sure that it is easy and safe for a person to use the toilet – this can mean good lighting, safe bed height, safe toilet height, and clothing that is easy to wear and remove.

Do Observe toileting patterns of a person and support them to go to the toilet. Report to nursing/supervisory staff any change in toileting pattern, discomfort, straining or leakages, and document this in care notes.

Name:

My reflections:

When attending to a person's concerns with toileting and faecal incontinence, what should I consider?

What can I do to make it easier for the older person to use the toilet?

My notes:

See related palliAGED Practice
Tip Sheets:
Constipation
Opioid Analgesics
Nutrition and Hydration

For references and the latest version of all Tip Sheets visit
palliated.com.au/Practice-Centre/For-Careworkers