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.

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**Tips for Careworkers:**

**Faecal Incontinence**

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**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.
**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

References used to develop this sheet are available at [www.palliaged.com.au](http://www.palliaged.com.au)