

# Product usage and lifestyle choices

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Urinary incontinence can range from a few drops when coughing or sneezing to flooding without warning. The impact this has on a person is not just related to the level of incontinence, but also characteristics such as age, gender, activity level, work environment, lifestyle and relationships. People with urinary incontinence will sometimes self-manage, but not always in ways that contribute to living independent and pleasurable lives. Urinary incontinence has an impact on the person's physical, emotional and social health and wellbeing. <sup>(1)</sup>

It is important to recognise that urinary incontinence products are not the first answer to incontinence but rather what is used to assist in continence management when all other options have been explored. Anyone suffering from incontinence should have a continence assessment by a qualified health professional.

When considering both disposable and non-disposable absorbent products, it is important to recognise that the impact of living with absorbent pads goes beyond pad performance characteristics alone, and that users could benefit from advice, not only on the range of pads available, but also on strategies to reduce associated anxieties and practical aspects of coping <sup>(2)</sup>. Continence assessments should include recognition of lifestyle choices.

Bladder management of the spinal cord injured incorporates three important goals: to preserve the upper tract, minimise lower tract complications and be compatible with the person's lifestyle. <sup>(3)</sup>

Your continence management program once established often does not change unless your condition changes or your health status changes. However, the same can not be said for the products you use. In the advancing world of technology, continence management products have undergone great change.

Changes in technology are often designed to address product usage across the many variants to a person's life. The same absorption pad used by an individual in

their daily life can not be what is worn when they are swimming. The same intermittent catheter used at home may not be convenient or easy to use outside the home environment. The leg bag worn under jeans is not the same type as that worn under shorts. The uridome used by those with a high pressure void is different to the uridome used by people with a dribble flow.

In summer our activities may be different and you may find that you need additional or different products, e.g. incontinent absorbent swim wear. Your health care professional is the best person to talk to about suitable products to manage your urinary incontinence. It is important when planning your continence management program that you discuss with your health care professional your lifestyle choices and how to manage your urinary incontinence within that context.

Compliance to your urinary continence management program is essential. To aid compliance, it is imperative the prescriber take into account your lifestyle and associated needs. A continence management program should not rule your life but rather be a part of your life. If your continence management program or associated products are preventing you from participating in lifestyle choices, seek advice from a qualified health professional.

## REFERENCES

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