

Incontinence, or Loss of Bladder or Bowel Control

It is common for people on hospice to sometimes lose control of their bladder or bowel, and they can often feel embarrassed or ashamed of their incontinence.

There are many ways caregivers can help patients maintain comfort, safety, and dignity during these moments.

Sometimes patients will not eat or drink to avoid having to go to the bathroom. This can cause them to feel weak or dizzy. Do everything you can to give the patient privacy, such as covering them with a loose sheet, asking others to leave the room, and leaving plenty of time for helping. Listen to the patient's concerns and try your best to communicate with them about their needs.

For patients who can still use a bedpan or urinal on their own, keeping one nearby can help them avoid an accident.

Many patients will be unable to use a bedpan quickly enough. These patients will benefit from the use of an incontinence pad (often called "chucks") or incontinence briefs (adult diapers).

Caregivers should place pads under the patient's hips and thighs, and change them as soon as they become wet. If the patient cannot lift his or her hips off the pad for the caregiver to slide it out, caregivers can change the pad similar to how one changes a bedsheet.

Here's how

- Have the patient bend his or her knees, and turn to one side.
- Roll-up half of the used pad toward the patient's back. Have the patient then turn to the other side, over the rolled-up half of the pad.
- This should allow you to roll-up the rest of the pad and throw it away.
- Remember to clean the area with wipes and gently pat dry the skin. This is important because damp or unclean skin may become infected.
- Place a clean pad under the patient the same way.

Another option for patients is to wear incontinence briefs. They should be changed quickly once wet. If the patient cannot easily take off the briefs themselves, caregivers can have patients turn to the side and undo one side of the diaper at a time. Clean the area with wipes and pat dry.

If patients have a bowel movement, the same methods work to keep patients and their beds clean and dry. However, caregivers should remove any excrement with toilet paper first before cleaning with wipes and pat drying. Sometimes excrement can get stuck on hair in this area. It can help to put a little shaving cream on the area first and then use a damp cloth or toilet paper to remove the excrement. toe of the sock and then pull them up and over the feet. Put on shoes or slippers that fit easily and comfortably. Avoid putting on anything tight or difficult to move in.