

Quick Reference Guide

Responding To Inappropriate Toileting

This quick reference guide contains a range of suggestions to help you to support a person who is having difficulty using the toilet. Inappropriate toileting involves going to the toilet in places outside of the toilet. This includes getting up from the toilet before completely finishing. The person may know they need to 'go' to the toilet, but uses the wrong place, such as a pot plant, rubbish bin or wardrobe.

Causes of inappropriate toileting may include: fear of small spaces; confusing their mirror image as someone else in the bathroom; and difficulties with identifying, finding and getting to the toilet in time. Brain changes due to dementia (e.g., visuo-spatial difficulties) can make it harder for the person to find the toilet if there is a lack of colour or contrast distinction (e.g., a white toilet in a room with white flooring and walls). The person may also think changes in flooring surfaces or colours will cause them to fall if they step into the space.

A person who is having these sorts of difficulties may need to re-learn to use the toilet or have a scheduled toileting plan. Contenance pads are often not the answer to inappropriate toileting. Always use sensitivity and tact to maintain the person's dignity. Your DBMAS behaviour consultant may tailor several of the strategies listed below by understanding the person and their situation.

The person has difficulty getting to the toilet in time.

✓ Do:

- Use behaviour or toileting charts to identify times the person goes to the toilet. Restlessness or fidgeting can be signs the person needs the toilet. Make notes of these signs so that you can better predict when the person needs to go to the toilet. Needing to go to the toilet is a natural response to eating.
- Take the person to the toilet just before these identified times or when the person shows signs. Ask about the person's usual toileting routine e.g., did they use the toilet before showering.
- Help the person to get started (initiating) toileting by using short simple tactful prompts/directions, demonstrations and cue cards.

The person is afraid to go into the toilet.

✓ Do:

- Explain the steps involved in toileting, being respectful and with awareness of possible discomfort or embarrassment the person may feel.
- Find out, and if possible, copy any features of the person's bathroom at home e.g., door colour, pictures.
- Provide a comfortable toilet e.g., nice temperature, smell and mirrors covered.

- Reassure the person and draw their attention to something else when entering the toilet. Place a picture they like on the wall facing the toilet door entry and ask them to look at/talk about it.
- Play music they like or sing/dance into the toilet.
- Remove mats that are a different colour to the floor or are shiny.
- Be flexible and use a commode or urine bottle if needed.

The person doesn't know where to look for the toilet.

✓ Do:

- Put up signs with a picture and the word 'toilet' (in preferred languages and contrasting colours/large print) on the toilet door and around the environment (with arrows) to assist the person to locate the toilet. Consider the height of signs and the eye level of the people you want to assist.
- Ensure the toilet is well lit day and night.
- Use a nightlight or plug in lights.
- Use luminous tape or plug in lights to mark the route to the toilet.
- Leave the toilet seat up.
- Ensure the toilet is a different colour contrast to the floor and wall behind.
- Replace the toilet seat with a coloured seat to assist the person to see it better.
- Remove items that may be misidentified for a toilet, e.g., rubbish bin, pot plant.

The person doesn't sit long enough to finish what they are doing.

✓ Do:

- Use a cue card or sign to remind the person to remain seated.
- Use cue cards to direct them through the steps for toileting.
- Give the person a magazine/book of interest to look through.
- Gently remind the person to remain seated.
- Try using a padded commode chair: this may be a more comfortable place to sit.
- Run water in the basin or play an audio track (CD or MP3) of running water. The sound can make the person feel the urge to go to toilet.
- Remove distractions that may prompt the person to leave the toilet.

✗ No matter the situation, do not:

- Scold the person for 'accidents', or in any way blame the person.
- Drag or force the person into the toilet or use inappropriate restraint while on the toilet.
- Expect the person to remember where the toilet is.

Want more information?



Toileting - Function focused care for assisted living <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tNDGfuUtcFo>



Continence management: Advice for carers of people with dementia
<http://www.alzscot.org/assets/0000/0159/continence.pdf>



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