Toileting

People with Alzheimer's disease or dementia can have accidents when they want to go to the bathroom.

WHY DOES THIS HAPPEN?

People with Alzheimer's or dementia might:

- have poor control of their body functions
- be taking medications that cause them to urinate a lot
- forget what the bathroom and toilet are used for
- feel embarrassed and ashamed to ask for help
- might not be able to find the bathroom in time
- might not be able to remove their clothes in time

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

ALLOW TIME & BE POSITIVE

- plan for extra time… be patient… don't rush
- stay calm and use a gentle voice
- give one step directions — "let's walk this way, let's come in here"
- think about if the person is embarrassed to get undressed in front of you or a person of a different sex

KEEP THINGS SIMPLE

- find clothes that are easy to take on and off, such as pants with an elastic waist or Velcro instead of buttons
- try to seat the person closer to the bathroom so they don't need to walk as far
- keep a light on in the bathroom so it can be seen when needed
- use a toilet seat with a bright color so that it can be seen easily
- install a raised toilet seat and grab bars – some individuals feel like they are falling when sitting down on a low toilet
- remove anything that looks like a toilet, such as a trash can

KEEP A SCHEDULE

- create a regular schedule for using the toilet: when they wake up, before and after meals, and just before bed
- limit water and other drinks close to bedtime

ACCIDENTS HAPPEN

- be understanding when accidents happen
- stay calm and comfort the person if they are upset
- be prepared with supplies, such as extra clothes and wipes
- if accidents happen suddenly or more often, talk with their doctor about possible reasons — for example, a new medication or an infection may cause this to happen

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