



Clothing for continence and incontinence

DLF Factsheet

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INTRODUCTION

Carefully chosen clothing, together with equipment for independence and establishing a routine, can often make the difference between continence and incontinence, dependence and independence.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

- Keep fastenings to a minimum, e.g. elastic waisted trousers or skirts
- Keep garments to a minimum
- Looser garments can be easier to put on/pull down than tight garments
- Choose clothes that enable you to undress quickly, e.g. trousers with long fly fasteners, loose underpants, and zip tags to making pulling up easier
- Choose clothing that is washable
- If a garment gets wet or soiled, it should be washed as soon as possible or at least soaked in cold water to minimise staining and odour
- Choose clothes which disguise drainage bags, and allow access for emptying

CHOICE OF CLOTHES

UNDERWEAR

WOMEN'S UNDERWEAR

Knickers

- Bikini briefs, thongs and tanga pants may be easier to manage than traditional knickers as they are easier to push or pull down
- French knickers with leg width of at least 40cm wide can be used if an individual is having difficulty getting knickers up or down. The crotch can be pulled to one side to use the toilet or female urinal
- If catheterised, any style can be worn, provided that the leg elastic does not constrict the catheter tube causing back pressure
- Open-crotch and drop-front knickers can eliminate the need to pull pants up and down, and are useful if using a hoist to transfer onto the toilet or when using a male or female hand-held urinal
- Crotchless knickers may be brought from adult shops/mail order catalogues
- Caminickers, bodies and teddies are two-in-one garments, replacing vests and knickers. They fasten at the crotch with small press studs, these can be difficult to reach and may cause rubbing if seated for long periods of time. A few specialist suppliers make front fastening pants with an extended crotch flap

* Pants are now available from a specialist company up to 10XL enabling those who have been previously unable to find pants to fit, to wear pants and pads if necessary

Adaptations

- Ordinary knickers can be adapted to have a crotch opening by undoing the front of crotch seam and extending the crotch flap to an accessible place at the front of the pants. This adaptation is also useful if tummy control pants are worn as their high elastane fibre content and fiddly fasteners make them difficult to remove in a hurry
- Removal of the crotch gusset from a traditional pair of bloomers and binding the opening enables them to become open crotch. If necessary, the opening can be extended by opening up the centre of the back seam

Petticoats/Vests

- Waist slips and short vests are more easily changed in case of accidents

Stockings/tights

- Hold-up stockings or stockings attached to a girdle or suspender belt are preferable to tights as they do not need to be removed; however, they are not recommended for anyone with circulation problems

- If tights are preferred try open gusset tights which are widely available in the High Street and when worn under the pants can be left in position when using the toilet or hand-held urinal

MEN'S UNDERWEAR

Underpants

- Boxer shorts tend to have short fly openings; lengthening the fly will make access easier
- Underpants with a horizontal opening may be helpful to some people; most high street clothing retailers stock men's underwear with openings on either side, horizontal or vertical
- If catheterised, any style of underpants can be worn, provided that the leg elastic does not constrict the catheter tube causing back pressure, e.g. boxer shorts
- Drop-front pants are now made for men by a few specialist suppliers
- Pants are now available from a specialist company up to 10XL enabling those who have been previously unable to find pants to fit, to wear pants and pads if necessary

Vests

- Long length vests are difficult to remove quickly and would need to be changed when wet and may get in the way during transfers on and off the toilet

TROUSERS

- Trousers with a completely or half elasticated waistband may be the easiest to manage because they can be pushed down.
- Styles with front pleats, rather than those which are straight across the front, are easier to remove at speed.
- Trousers with a longer fly fastening are available from traditional suppliers and enable men to lower their trousers more easily giving clearer access when using a hand held urinal.
- Men may find braces easier to manage. Edgware braces may be particularly helpful - these enable trousers to be lowered without removing garments worn over the braces or undoing the braces. Contact a clothing advice service for details.
- Trousers styles which have looser fitting legs will enable drainage bags to be well concealed.
- Leisure trousers with a zip at the knee give better access when emptying catheter bags
- For men who self-catheterise, elasticated trousers or styles with pleats at the waist or with a long fly fastening may be easier to manage

Adaptations to trousers

- A 25cm zip inserted head down in the thigh or leg seam gives easy access for emptying drainage bags. A pocket can be sewn into the inside of the trouser leg to hold a bag.
- Changing a standard hook and bar to a larger size, or replacing it with a large button or trouser weight press stud, makes fastening easier.
- Replacing the hook and bar with Velcro is another alternative but, to hold securely, the Velcro must be doubled back through a 'd' ring.
- If someone finds zips difficult to manage, zipper pull attachments, key ring loops or co-ordinating ribbon loops may be a solution; plain Velcro does tend to come undone on trouser fastenings and can be difficult to line up.
- Cargo trousers and shorts with a pocket at knee or thigh level can be adapted by opening the seam inside the pocket, to carry the catheter bag.
- Drop back/front trousers are another adaptation which involves inserting a 30cm long zip into each side seam, so that the front or back can be dropped. An elastic waistband keeps up the side which is not dropped.
- Underpants can be altered by opening the side seams and attaching front and

back waistbands to the trousers with Velcro. The two garments can then be taken off together. Always ensure the hooked scratchy surface Velcro faces away from the body.

- Extending the fly opening as far as the crotch seam prevents spillage when using a hand held urinal.
- For women who self-catheterise, the fly could be extended to the crotch or continuous openings can be inserted into the inside of the leg seam from knee to knee, through the crotch, and fastened with a simple zip or Velcro strip. This will give easy access if worn with crotchless or drop-front pants. Ensure any fasteners used do not damage the skin and that the scratchy Velcro layer faces away from the skin.

DRESSES AND SKIRTS

- A-line dresses and skirts are easier to lift out of the way quickly than straight, fitted or very full skirts
- A wrap-over skirt can be unfastened quickly for quick access
- Wheelchair users may find wrap-over or completely button-through styles, which can be left behind on the chair, convenient

NIGHTWEAR

- For women, knee length nightdresses and nightshirts are usually easiest for toilet transfers, urinal use and catheterisation.
- Choose pyjamas with short jackets and trousers with elasticated waists
- For men, knee length nightshirts can be a useful substitute for pyjamas and may be easier to manage when using the toilet, urinal or catheter

DRESSING TECHNIQUES

- Removing underpants while still sitting is easier if they fit loosely. A seated individual can push down underpants each side alternately whilst rocking from buttock to buttock
- People who can support themselves with one hand on a very secure toilet rail may be able to lift their buttocks at the same time as adjusting their underpants with the free hand. If shoulder movement is limited, pulling up pants and trousers with arms crossed over the front of the body reduces the shoulder movement required
- Someone with poor grip may find that loops positioned so that he/she can insert a thumb into them are helpful. This technique can be used for both pants/knickers and trousers

EQUIPMENT TO ASSIST WITH DRESSING

- A dressing stick with a rubber grip at one end can be useful to help push trousers or underpants down. The hook at the other end can be used to pull them up if loops have been sewn into the tops.
- A 'pant clip' is a pair of sturdy clips joined together by a length of elastic. One clip is fastened to the waistband and the other to the upper garments so that when trousers and pants are lowered they do not fall out of reach during transfer onto the toilet. The 'Clip and Pull' is a more heavy duty version of this device which is designed to pull trousers up with one hand or when seated.
- Hand-held urinals for men and women have been improved in recent years and now offer an acceptable alternative to transferring on and off the toilet during the day and night.

INCONTINENCE PANTS AND PADS

Many styles of pants and pads are available. However, the style of pant is often specific to the type of pad chosen. Incorrect mixing of pads and pants of different types may well result in leakage. Pants should always be close fitting. Pants with built-in pads are available from specialist suppliers to suit all styles with a

range of boxers, pretty thongs and bikini briefs with matching camisoles (contact the Independent Living Centre in Exeter for details). Built in pads may seem more acceptable for men and women with occasional continence needs, but when wet the whole garment will need to be removed and washed. For more details on continence pads and other products contact the Continence Foundation, Promocon or your local continence adviser (find out the name and number of your continence adviser from your GP or local Independent Living Centre).

Trousers from traditional suppliers with a high waist and a fly fastening that is 2in longer than standard and those with front pleats, gathers or elastication will accommodate pads more comfortably than hipster or low waist trousers.

Swimming

It is possible to continue with or take up swimming as a sport or hobby if you have problems with continence. There is a range of swimwear that will protect against leakage of urine or faeces for children and adults or give extra support to people who use ostomy bags. You can choose from a fitted protective pant worn under your swimsuit/trunks or a swimsuit/trunk with built in protection. (See specialist suppliers.)

USEFUL CONTACTS

Continence Foundation

Tel: 08707703246

Helpline: 0845 345 0165 (9am–1pm, M-F)

Website:

www.continence-foundation.org.uk

Answers calls from the public and professionals about bowel and bladder problems.

Incontact

Tel: 01536 533255

Email: info@incontact.org

website: www.incontact.org

Provides information and support for people affected by bladder and bowel problems.

PromoCon

Redbank House

4 St Chad's Street

Cheetham

Manchester

M8 8QA

Tel: 0870 760 1580

Fax: 0161 214 5961

Helpline: 0161 834 2001

Website: www.promocon.co.uk

Advice and information service for all continence needs.

Clothing Advice and Information Services

Contact your nearest service for advice and information about specialist suppliers of clothing or equipment.

Clothing Advice Service

Independent Living Centre

Isca House,

Haven Road,

Exeter EX2 8DS

Tel: 01392687276

Website: www.devon.gov.uk/ilc

Contact: Philippa Greenslade

Independent Living Partnership
Lantern

Meadow Farm Drive,

Shrewsbury SY1 4NG

Tel: 01743 210 820

Clothes To Suit

Posture Independence and Mobility

Service Oxford Centre For Enablement

Nuffield Orthopaedic Centre

Windmill Road

Headington

Oxford OX37LD

Tel: 01865 227 317

Contact: by referral from any local health care professional.

Style Centre

Disabled Living

Redbank House

4 St Chads Street

Cheetham

Manchester

Tel: 0161 214 5959

Email: info@disabledliving.co.uk

Living
The Vassal Centre
Gill Avenue
Fishponds
Bristol BS16 2QQ
Tel: 0117 965 3651
www.thisisliving.org.uk
Specialist clothing or adaptation services,
specialising in underwear for people with
special needs.

Special Occasions Clothes
27 Donald Road
London E13 OQF
Tel: 020 8470 4868
Contact: Cryn Horn
Made to measure for each customer.

Specialist Suppliers
Discretely Different
Tel: 01162 386338
Mail order knickers with front fastening
flap.
www.discretelydifferent.com

The Big Bloomers Company
www.thebigbloomerscompnay.co.uk
Tel: 01543 250251
Pants up to 10XL.

P&S Healthcare Ltd
Edward House
King Edward Street
Hucknall
Nottingham NG15 7JR
Tel: 0115 968 1188
www.hilaryunderwear.com
A range of stylish underwear with built in
pads.

Ostomart
www.ostomart.co.uk
Clothing including underwear and
swimwear for people with ostomy bags

Perfectly Happy People
www.in-confidence.co.uk
A range of pant for continence including
swimwear.

**We would like to thank the Clothing
Advice Service at the Independent
Living Centre in Exeter for assistance
in updating these factsheets.**

Donation Form

We hope this factsheet has proven useful to you. If you would like to help the DLF continue to provide valuable information such as this, you may wish to consider making a small donation towards our work. As a charity, we rely on the generosity of the public to help us continue to help older and disabled people lead independent lives.

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If you would like to make a credit card donation, please call our Fundraising Department on **020 7289 6111 (ext: 254)**, or alternatively visit our website at **www.dlf.org.uk**

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NB: You must pay an amount of income tax and/or capital gains tax at least equal to the tax we reclaim on your donations in the tax year (currently 28p for every £1 you give)

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380-384 Harrow Road, London W9 2HU**

Thank You

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