

Living Well with Dementia Caregiver Tips on Toileting



Why are There Complications with Using the Bathroom?

- Incontinence may be a direct result of the damage caused to the brain by the dementia.
- The individual may not be able to locate the bathroom on their own (even in familiar locations).
- Side effects of medications they are taking.
- The individual may not be able to communicate the need to use the restroom.
- The individual may have an underlying medical condition such as a UTI.
- The individual may not be able to remove their clothes by themselves.
- There may be too many steps involved with using the toilet and it becomes confusing for them.
- The individual may feel unsafe using the restroom alone.

Although less common in the earlier stages of dementia, incontinence can become an issue as the disease progresses into the middle to late stages of dementia.

Caregivers can help make it easier for the individual living with dementia to access and use the toilet. It is also important to stay calm which can help reduce any embarrassment the individual may feel due to an accident.

How You Can Help

Tips to Help Aid with Incontinence:

- Update the bathroom for easy and safe access to the toilet. You may need to install grab bars on or near the toilet to help them get on and off.
- Declutter the bathroom. Don't have too many items on the floor and leave enough walking space for the individual to get safely to the toilet
- Develop a routine. Taking the individual to the restroom every 2 hours can help decrease accidents.
- Watch for signs that they are uncomfortable. Are they aggravated? Fidgeting? Pacing? They may need to use the restroom and cannot express this need verbally.
- Dress the individual in clothes that are easy to remove. If they need help undressing to use the restroom, do so slowly as to not make them feel rushed and encourage them to help you.
- Consider purchasing flushable wet wipes (found in the toilet paper aisle). This can be an easier cleanup for them as well as the caregiver if they require assistance.
- Label the bathroom on the outside of the door. Sometimes a simple sign with a picture of the toilet will help them recognize the location.
- Limit intake of fluids towards the end of the day. However, it is important to ensure they are still obtaining enough fluids during the day. Not getting enough fluids can lead to other medical concerns such as infections and dehydration.
- Once they are able to use the toilet, don't rush them. It may take a few moments to complete this activity and they may need privacy.

For more information about caregiver tips or program availability through Living Well with Dementia, please contact Easterseals Homemakers & Health Services at 603.335.1770.