

HELPING SOMEONE TO THE TOILET



This video in the AARP Home Alone AllianceSM series on managing incontinence (reduced control of urination or bowel movements) is in two parts. Rushing to the bathroom creates a serious risk of tripping and falling, so the first part talks about preventing falls in the home. The video reviews some basic steps to prevent incontinence and shows how to clean the perineal area after using the toilet.

The video also reviews some advice from the first video in the series. For example, remember that your family member should follow a regular schedule of going to the toilet after meals and every two hours in between. Also drinking 6–8 glasses of water or other noncaffeinated drinks per day keeps the person’s fluid level stable.

Preventing Falls

Even if your family member has incontinence only once in a while, it’s a good idea to make sure the home is as safe as possible to prevent falls. Two videos in the mobility series produced by the AARP Home Alone Alliance offer guidance on this topic. The first video, “Preparing Your Home for Safe Mobility,” is available at <http://videos.aarp.org/detail/video/5330018190001/family-caregiving-series:-preparing-your-home-for-safe-mobility---aarp>. A resource guide is available at <https://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/ppi/2019/02/haa-preparing-home-resource-guide.pdf>.

These are the key steps to removing safety hazards:

- > Keep hallways and stairways clear of clutter.
- > Remove area rugs or attach them to the floor with double-sided tape.
- > Make sure all electrical cords are placed where no one can trip on them.
- > Clean up spills immediately.
- > Add handrails and grab bars.
- > If the person’s home has stairs, make sure there are handrails on both sides of the stairs.
- > Grab bars in bathrooms are very important because wet surfaces can be dangerous.

The second video is called “What to Do When a Person Falls.” It’s available at <http://videos.aarp.org/detail/video/5327211325001/family-caregiving-series:-what-to-do-when-someone-falls>. A resource guide is available at <https://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/ppi/2019/02/haa-mobility-falls-resource-guide.pdf>.

Good Toileting Hygiene and Skin Care

The video uses a plastic model to show good toileting hygiene.

- > Set up the person’s bedroom and bathroom so that everything is in within easy reach.
- > You’ll need disposable gloves, cleaning wipes, and skin care products such as ointments or moisturizing lotions recommended by your health care provider. You may also want to have deodorizers.
- > Be gentle but thorough.
- > If the person is male, use a washcloth and warm water to gently clean the skin of the perineal area, moving from front to back. Do not move from back to front due to the risk of introducing germs from the anal area into the urethra, a primary source of urinary tract infection.
- > If the person is female, separate the labia (outer folds of the vagina) and clean front to back using downward strokes.

- > When you're finished washing, dry the area thoroughly to prevent skin from becoming chapped.
- > If there are sensitive spots or a rash, use protective ointment or cream that contains zinc oxide or petroleum jelly.
- > Dispose of gloves and wash hands thoroughly.
- > Help the person move to a comfortable position.

Handling Used Linens and Supplies

- > Never reuse linens used to clean the perineal area or any other part of the body. Use a clean washcloth to minimize the spread of germs.
- > Use a mattress protector on the bed.
- > If bed linens are soiled or become wet during the cleaning process, replace them as quickly as possible.
- > Place used linens in a special container.
- > Throw away all used incontinence products in a special waste container.

- > To maintain skin health, change soiled garments and products frequently and report new areas of redness or breakdown in the area to your health care provider.

After you have done this several times, it will become easier and more comfortable for you and your family member.

Other Resources

For more information about managing incontinence, visit the National Association for Continence at www.nafc.org.

Remember to take care of yourself as you help your family member. Find someone to talk to about your own feelings about handling this care. Look for support groups and message boards where people in similar situations share their experiences and suggestions. You are not alone!

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