

SELECTING INCONTINENCE PRODUCTS



This AARP Home Alone AllianceSM video features a family caregiver and her friend, a nurse who specializes in managing incontinence, whom you met in Episode 5. In this video they turn to the practical side of managing incontinence. Which products should I buy? And will insurance cover the cost?

Types of Incontinence Products

There are many types of incontinence products on the market; just take a walk through the aisles of any large drug store and you're likely to be overwhelmed. Searching online will also give you a range of options. As you decide which products are right for your family member, keep in mind their fit, form, and function. Here are some more things to consider:

- > Whether the incontinence is urinary or bowel or both
- > The person's body size
- > The person's ability to move around
- > How absorbent the product needs to be
- > How much leakage there is and how often it happens
- > How hard it is to use the product each time
- > The person's comfort level with different products and how the products feel

You may need to have a trial period to determine what works best. Sometimes the condition changes with new medications or better management techniques. If you need help, talk to the health care provider who manages your family member's incontinence.

The main types of incontinence products are:

- > Panty liners
- > Perineal pads for women and guards for men
- > Adult briefs
- > Protective underwear
- > Underwear or briefs that can be refastened
- > Bed pads and underpads

The National Association for Continence (NAFC) has a guide to choosing absorbent products at <https://www.nafc.org/adult-absorbents>.

Some people find it embarrassing or inconvenient to shop for incontinence products, and they can be bulky to carry. You can have these products delivered from online or catalog suppliers. If you find a set of products that work well, you can have a monthly delivery schedule so that you don't have to reorder unless there's a change.

The NAFC also has a useful guide to keeping the bed dry at <https://www.nafc.org/bhealth-blog/a-caregivers-guide-to-keeping-the-bed-dry>. The guide discusses supplies such as a zippered vinyl waterproof mattress cover, waterproof mattress pad, waterproof flat sheet, and waterproof underpad. It suggests using layers of blankets rather than a thick comforter because blankets are easier to wash.

Paying for Incontinence Products

Most incontinence products are disposable and are not covered by insurance, including original Medicare and private insurance. Some supplemental Medicare policies, such as Medigap, may cover these products. In some states, Medicaid may cover some products. Check your state's Medicaid office for details. The Veterans Administration (VA) will cover the cost of products if they're ordered by a physician (deemed "medically necessary").

For more information on selecting and paying for incontinence products, visit the NAFC 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!