

# Health & Wellbeing

## June – Continence



### ***The facts***

Healthy bladder and bowel habits can help you avoid bladder and bowel control problems such as incontinence. Incontinence can have a major impact on your quality of life. If you or someone you know is affected by incontinence it's important to remember that:

- You're not alone - 5 million Australians are affected by incontinence
- It affects both men and women, regardless of your age or background
- It can be treated, managed and in many cases cured

### ***Prevention***

In many cases, incontinence can be prevented by adopting healthy diet and lifestyle habits. Here are some simple steps that can be incorporated into your daily life to help prevent incontinence.

### ***Drink well***

- Aim to drink 6-8 cups (1.5 - 2 litres) of fluid per day, unless otherwise advised by your doctor
- Spread your drinks evenly throughout the day
- Drink more fluids (preferably water) if the weather is hot or if you are exercising
- Cut down on alcohol, fizzy drinks and drinks that have caffeine in them as they irritate the bladder
- Don't reduce your fluid intake if you have a bladder control problem, as this will concentrate your urine and make the problem worse

### ***Eat a healthy diet***

- Eat plenty of fibre, which improves bowel function. Fibre is found in foods such as multi grain or whole grain breads, cereals and cereal products, fruit, vegetables, legumes, nuts and seeds

- Eat 2 servings of fruit, 5 servings of vegetables and 5 servings of cereals and breads each day

### **Get active**

- Aim to exercise for 30 minutes most days. Exercise stimulates movement of the bowel, and even gentle exercise like walking helps
- Do your pelvic floor muscle exercises regularly. Obesity, pregnancy, childbirth, regular heavy lifting and a chronic cough can weaken the pelvic floor, but you can strengthen these muscles with specific exercises. For example pelvic floor exercises click the following link: <https://www.continence.org.au/pages/how-do-pelvic-floor-muscles-help.html>

### **Practice good toilet habits**

- Go to the toilet when you get the urge to open your bowels, as this is the most effective time to completely empty your bowels.
- Avoid constipation as this affects bladder and bowel function. If you often strain to move your bowels, the pelvic floor stretches and weakens over time.
- Don't get into the habit of going to the toilet 'just in case' - only go when you need to, and visit your doctor as soon as you suspect a urinary tract infection.



### **Get help – TMHS continence clinic**

Our qualified female Continence Nurse has specialist knowledge and skills in continence care and is available for help and advice regarding:

- Pelvic floor muscle exercises
- Bowel and bladder management problems
- Continence aids advice and free samples

For an appointment please contact the Josie Black Community Health Centre on 5592 0300.