

# Getting the best from continence products



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## A guide for you, your family, or carer

Disposable continence products are very effective at containing bladder and/or bowel leakage, so long as they are the correct size and fit for the individual and they are used properly. This leaflet provides information on how to get the best use out of disposable continence products. However, you should always follow the manufacturer's instructions, which are usually on the side of the packet and available online. You should also follow any advice given to you by your healthcare professional.

### Getting the correct size

Most products come in a range of sizes. These relate not just to the size of the individual that the product is for, but also to how much urine they will hold. It is important to have the correct size. If the size is wrong then leakage is more likely, regardless of the level of absorbency. Products should always be fitted as advised by the manufacturer.

The correct size for one-piece products (ones that do not need a separate pant e.g. wrap-around, belted or pull-on pant-style products) should be selected according to the waist and hip size of the person who is going to wear them. If the product fits at the waist and hips, but is too loose around the legs, causing leakage, then a fixation pant worn over the product will help.

### Storage

Products are vacuum packed. It is better to keep them in their original packaging until about 24 hours before you are likely to need them. Take them out of the packaging about a day before you are likely to need them. This gives time for the fibres inside the product to expand and therefore work more effectively.

Store the products in a dry place, otherwise they will absorb some of the moisture from the environment and may work less well.

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## Applying the product

Follow the manufacturer's advice when applying the product. Most leaks occur because of poor fit, or problems with the way the product has been put on. There are instructions on how to apply the product on the packet. There are also videos online.

It is important to remember:

- To avoid using creams or talcs wherever possible. These will block the pores in the top sheet of the product and slow down the rate at which the urine can get into the product. This is why using talc or creams makes the product more likely to leak
- If creams are needed, they should be applied sparingly and rubbed in well
- Oil based creams should be avoided if possible, as they are more likely to cause problems with blockage of the pores in the product than water-based creams
- Cup and fold the product before putting it on. This means that the product should be fully opened out and then folded in half lengthways. It should be given a gentle tug to activate any elastic. Check that, if there is any internal elastic, it is standing up at right angles from the product
- When the product is put on check that it is cupped through the groin area. This means that the product should be fitted snugly against the skin in the crease where the thighs meet the groin. It should be in a U shape through the groin. If the product is creased upwards as it goes through the groin, the urine will run off the top of the product towards the elastic at the edges, before it can be absorbed and the product is more likely to leak.

**One-piece products:** it is important that the tabs are done up correctly as this improves the fit around the legs. Usually, if there are two pairs of tabs, the bottom pair of tabs are done up first. They should be an equal distance from the middle of the product and angled in a / \ shape, pointing upwards. The top tabs should then be done up, but angled in a v shape, pointing downwards. The top tabs should also be an equal distance from the middle of the product. They may overlap the bottom tabs.

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**Two-piece products:** it is important that self-adhesive products are worn with close fitting underwear. Products that are not self-adhesive must be used with correctly fitted fixation pants. These are usually supplied with the product. If they have not been supplied, then talk to your healthcare professional about what you should wear to hold them in place.

## Changing the product

Most products are designed to contain more than one urination (wee). They have a one-way top sheet that is soft and has very small holes in it to allow fluid through. The urine is then locked away by a highly absorbent material in the core of the product. Once the urine is locked away in the core of the product the skin will remain dry. Odour protectors will prevent any smell. Therefore, products do not need to be changed as soon as they have some urine in them.

All adult-sized products have wetness indicators on the outside. Your healthcare professional will show you these. The wetness indicator becomes smudged or changes colour when the product is wet. Once half the wetness indicator is smudged the product should still contain a further full urination. The product should be changed if it is soiled (there is poo in it) or two-thirds or more of the wetness indicator is smudged or has changed colour.

## Disposal of used products

Used products should be put in a bag and then placed in the dustbin. They do not need a special refuse collection if they are being used at home.

## Further information

Find more information about adult bladder and bowel health in our information library at [www.bbuk.org.uk](http://www.bbuk.org.uk). You can also contact the [Bladder & Bowel UK confidential helpline](tel:01612144591) (0161 214 4591).

For further advice on bladder and bowel problems speak to your GP or other healthcare professional.

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