

# Faecal Incontinence

People with faecal incontinence have difficulty in controlling their bowel, resulting in the involuntary loss of flatus (wind), liquid or solid from the bowel at the wrong time or in the wrong place.

Faecal incontinence affects as many as 1 in every 100 people, many are also affected by urinary incontinence. Incontinence affects around four million men and women in Australia of all ages and backgrounds.

## **There are several causes of faecal incontinence:**

- Muscle weakness – may be due to childbirth and types of surgery such as haemorrhoids
- Diarrhoea – due to infection, medications such as antibiotics, previous radiotherapy and specific bowel diseases such as Crohn's
- Constipation and impaction – this is commonly characterised by hard bowel actions passed infrequently along with episodes of incontinence of diarrhoea
- Disorders of the nervous system – this may be the result of disease or injury to the nerves, for example; multiple sclerosis, spinal cord injury or stroke
- Disorders of the lower bowel – such as anal fissure, haemorrhoids and cancer.

## **Everyone with faecal incontinence should have a comprehensive assessment. The following health care professionals are available for advice:**

- General Practitioners, can assess, diagnose and treat incontinence. If necessary they will refer patients on to specialists
- Continence Nurse Advisors are able to assess and help patients with a plan to manage their condition
- Physiotherapists will develop a specific pelvic floor exercise program to improve the management of incontinence
- Dieticians can provide expert nutrition and dietary advice
- Occupational therapists assist people of all ages to improve their ability to carry out day-to-day activities
- Pharmacists can offer advice on medication that may cause or aggravate incontinence.

## **Handy tips to help individuals improve their bowel health include:**

- Eat a well balanced diet – that includes at least two fruits and five vegetables everyday
- Drink 1.5 to 2 litres per day (unless otherwise advised by your doctor). Water is recommended and remember to limit drinks that contain caffeine such as; tea, coffee, soft drinks and high energy drinks
- Exercise daily - 30 minutes of walking, gardening, swimming or cycling may help to improve your general health (you can break up the exercise into short periods)
- Discuss your medications with your Doctor – some medications can affect your bowel and/or bladder
- Take caution when using laxatives – always discuss long term use with your Doctor.

There are a range of products and aids available to assist people with the management of faecal incontinence.

If you require further information about the products available or to place an order contact our customer service team at Independence Australia Health Solutions.

Free call: 1300 788 855 or email: [customerservice@independenceaustralia.com](mailto:customerservice@independenceaustralia.com)