

# THE *Taboo issue!*

Men and women of all ages and backgrounds experience bladder and bowel control problems. Although it is a common complaint – experienced by 1 in 4 Australians, 15 years and older – incontinence is not normal or a natural part of ageing.

Some health conditions and life events put you at risk of developing incontinence. For men, these include obesity, constipation, diabetes, a chronic cough, heart conditions and some medications. An enlarged prostate (BPH) and prostate surgery are also common causes for urinary incontinence in men.

So, how do you know if you might have a bladder or bowel control problem? It is a good idea to consult a health professional if you are experiencing any of the following symptoms:

- trouble starting the flow of urine
- slow urine stream once started
- the need to pass urine more often
- leaking between visits to the toilet
- an urgent need to pass urine
- burning sensation or pain when passing urine or blood in urine
- feeling that the bladder is not fully empty after going to the toilet
- inability to hold in bowel motions (poo)
- infrequent (less than three times a week) or hard bowel motions

So, what can you do to prevent, cure or better manage these issues?

Adopting the following daily healthy habits can help to improve bladder and bowel health:

**Eat well:** consume at least 30 grams of fibre each day (such as that found in leafy green vegetables)

**Drink well:** limit caffeine, alcohol and fizzy drinks and consume one-and-a-half to two litres of fluid each day unless advised otherwise by your doctor – fluid includes water, fruit juice, tea, coffee, milk, soup, jellies and icecream

**Exercise regularly:** aim to exercise for 30 minutes each day

**Keep your pelvic floor toned:** do pelvic floor exercises and make sure your fitness routine includes pelvic floor safe exercises (learn more at [www.pelvicfloorfirst.org.au](http://www.pelvicfloorfirst.org.au))

**Practise good toilet habits:** go when you need to and completely empty your bladder and bowel each time.

## MORE INFORMATION

For free information and resources  
phone the National Continence  
Helpline 1800 33 00 66  
[www.continence.org.au/men](http://www.continence.org.au/men)

