



National Prescribing Service Limited

MEDIA RELEASE

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Managing urinary incontinence in primary care

Urinary incontinence is often underreported. One survey conducted in Australian GP waiting rooms found that only 30% of participants with urinary incontinence had spoken to a health professional about it.

To assist health professionals to identify and manage patients with incontinence or at risk of developing incontinence, the National Prescribing Service (NPS) has developed a new program, *Managing urinary incontinence in primary care*.

“People are often reluctant to talk about incontinence because they may feel embarrassed. Some think it is a normal part of ageing or the childbirth process and therefore don’t think it useful to discuss incontinence with their doctor,” NPS clinical adviser, Judith Mackson said.

Health professionals are encouraged to routinely ask about a history of incontinence in women who are at a greater risk of becoming incontinent. This includes those who have experienced recent childbirth, are overweight or have chronic health conditions.

“Determining the cause of incontinence is important because treatment options vary depending on the type of incontinence, and some medications can exacerbate the symptoms. A bladder diary is a useful tool in the initial bladder assessment and treatment evaluation,” Ms Mackson said.

The NPS *Managing urinary incontinence in primary care* program encourages health professionals to:

- Ask at-risk patients about urinary incontinence
- Assess the causes of incontinence, considering possible drug-related incontinence
- Distinguish between the types of incontinence to ensure appropriate treatment
- Consider non-drug therapies (including physiotherapy and incontinence clinics) in conjunction with drug therapy, where appropriate.

“Physical and behavioural therapies are first line; they promote self-management and have less risk of side effects than medicines. Providing detailed information about all management options, including physiotherapy, may also help those concerned about surgery,” Ms Mackson said.

As part of the therapeutic program, health professionals are encouraged to:

- read NPS News (66): *Managing urinary incontinence in primary care* and
- participate in the e-case study (61): *Achieving bladder control* (an online case study for time poor health professionals)

For more information on the causes and therapeutic options for urinary incontinence visit www.nps.org.au/health_professionals, phone 02 8217 8700 or email info@nps.org.au.

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