

Ask the Experts Webcast – Q&A Info Sheet

Urinary Challenges in Prostate Cancer

The following information has been prepared by PCFA Prostate Cancer Specialist Nurse Kerry Santoro, on the basis of the Ask the Experts Webcast on Wednesday May 6.

How can the role of a prostate cancer nurse assist with helping men be well informed about the risks of urinary incontinence before making a decision on prostate cancer treatment?

- A key role of the prostate cancer specialist nurse is to be a primary point of contact for a man, his partner and family following a prostate cancer diagnosis.
- There needs to be time put aside to dedicate to counselling the man, his partner and family regarding his diagnosis of prostate cancer.
- How we manage prostate cancer is not clear-cut and not everyone is suitable for all treatments, so ensuring a man clearly understands his diagnosis is really important as it can help to explain why we recommend certain treatments.
- There should be dedicated time to spend with the man and his family, for counselling around what treatment options are available to him, and what these treatments may mean in regards to quality of life outcomes. Men, their partner and family should be encouraged to bring some questions to the appointment, the appointment should be held in a private and quiet space, and the clinician needs to ensure there is adequate time set aside for the appointment, so the man and his family do not feel rushed.
- Men and their family should be provided with some written resources to refer to and also some online resources to refer to.
- Clinicians must be realistic in explaining to men the potential urinary incontinence risks associated with treatment. Incontinence has such a significant impact on a man's QOL, so understanding the potential urinary issues which may arise after treatment is so important in helping a man make an informed decision around treatment.

Let's talk about costs - what's the cost benefit of surgery - versus conservative measures to manage incontinence - and what kind of funding is available?

- Continence aids can become a financial burden for men who are suffering from urinary incontinence. The Continence Aids Payment scheme, otherwise known as the CAPS scheme, is an Australian Government funded scheme which provides an annual payment to people who have permanent and severe urinary incontinence. I encourage men to speak to their treating clinician, whether this is their local GP, Specialist, Continence Nurse, Physiotherapist or Prostate Cancer Nurse, to see if they are eligible for the scheme.
- There is criteria to meet eligibility however, if they do, the man will currently receive \$609 a year to assist with some of the costs for their continence products. The CAPS scheme is tax exempt so will not impact any other taxable income.
- Some states/territories may offer state based government supported schemes and if this is the case the man may need to contact his scheme manager to find out if this will affect his eligibility for CAPS or not.
- The CAPS form is available on the Australian Government Department of Health website.

<https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/continence-aids-payment-scheme-caps>

What types of aids can be used to manage moderate and severe leakage?

There are a multitude of aids out there to help manage moderate to severe urinary incontinence. If possible, men should have a continence assessment performed by a continence nurse advisor, continence physiotherapist or other suitable health professional can really help with choosing continence products which are specific to the man's needs. Men can also call the national continence helpline on 1800 330 066 and someone on the other end of the line can also help steer you in the right direction.

Pads

- Male continence pads are designed to absorb urine away from the surface of the pad, and into to base. The materials they are made of are also designed to reduce odour. There are different shaped pads, and different sizes, depending on the man's needs. Some pads work by being placed in a supportive pair of underwear, with a sticky adhesive on the back on the pad to hold it in place. Others are designed in a pant look, and these styles tend to have a larger holding capacity than those that sit in the underwear. It's important to choose a pad which contains the leakage, and can last a few hours before needing to change it.
- There are different brands of men's pads available on the market. Some of these companies offer samples to try, before you buy, and this can help men identify what pads may suit their needs best, without having to buy a whole packet to find out.
- It can be difficult to know when to change a pad. Ideally, a pad is worn until it starts to feel uncomfortable or, a quick test is to lightly touch the surface of the pad, and if it feels wet to touch, it's time to change it.
- Understandably, it's not easy to change a pad when out in public, so please keep in mind; a person can use the accessible toilet (sometimes referred to as a disabled toilet) as these toilets allow for privacy and often have a bin within the cubicle, which can be useful for changing and disposing the pad.
- Supermarkets, chemists, medical supplies stores and online healthcare stores all stock male pads so they are generally easy to access.

Uridomes/External Sheaths

- Uridomes or external sheaths may also be an option for some men. The sheath looks like a condom with an open connector end, which is rolled over the shaft of the penis. There is a lining of adhesive inside the sheath which allows it to stay in place, over the penis. The end of the sheath attaches to a drainage bag, which is then strapped to the leg, and worn underneath clothing, so it's concealed.
- Uridomes must be fitted by a health professional, as a good fit is imperative to ensuring the sheath feels comfortable and does not fall off.
- Uridomes can be a good option for men who have moderate to severe leakage, who may not like wearing pads, or feels confident with pads. They can also be a good management options for men who are immobile. A sheath can last a day, but must be changed every 24 hours.
- Uridomes are not for everyone, but certainly need to be acknowledged as an option for some men who would like to try something other than pads. Uridomes are not stocked in supermarkets and they are limited in chemists. The best place to access them is through medical supply stores and online stores.

Penile Clamps

- Penile clamps are another conservative management options to management urinary incontinence. The clamp is placed around the penis and applies pressure to the top and base of the penis, particularly on the urethra, (water pipe), which runs along the underside of the penis. This pressure stops the urine from leaking.
- Clamps are discreet and particularly useful for men who are out and about. They should be removed every 2- 3 hours to allow for urination and to rest the skin. Men who are interested in penile clamps must seek the help of a healthcare professional who has experience in fitting clamps, such as a

continence physiotherapist or continence/urology nurse advisor. Clamps can be purchased online or in some medical supplies stores, or some clinician's practices.

Are there any foods or drinks a man should avoid to improve their condition?

- Practicing good bladder and bowel habits is important to your overall health. This includes eating well, being well hydrated, exercising daily and keeping trim.
- If a man suffers from urinary urgency and frequency, then this may worsen incontinent episodes, so avoiding fluids which can irritate the bladder is worth a try. Tea, coffee, chocolate drinks, energy drinks, acidic drinks like tomato juice for example, fizzy drinks and alcohol can all irritate the bladder so a simple measure is to eliminate these fluids from your diet. You will soon know if they are contributing cause to your bladder issues as the urgency to go to the toilet should reduce, and in turn, hopefully the incontinent episodes will also decrease.

What kind of support is out there for men suffering from urinary dysfunction following prostate cancer treatment?

- There is so much support out there for men suffering from urinary dysfunction and incontinence after prostate cancer treatment. My key message to men is that it is important to speak to health care professionals about urinary issues – we all want to help! Urinary incontinence unfortunately remains a taboo subject for a lot of people. It is very common for men to feel very embarrassed and not talk about their urinary issues. Many families don't even know the extent of issues, but it is so important not to accept it as it is and suffer in silence. Urinary issues cause significant distress, both physically, psychologically and financially. With proper assessment and support there are things that can be done about bothersome incontinence, even years after treatment.
- The role of the partner should also be acknowledged. It can be extremely difficult for partners to watch their loved one struggle with urinary dysfunction, day in, day out. Partners often bear the brunt of the frustrations a man may feel, so it's important they also understand that we are here to support them as well, in any way we can.

For more information, support, or advice contact us on 1800 22 00 99 or email enquiries@pcfa.org.au