

2.6 Managing Symptoms of PSP

Bowel and Bladder Problems

This Help Sheet outlines some of the common bowel and bladder problems experienced by people with Progressive Supranuclear Palsy (PSP). It also suggests therapies, treatments and strategies for managing these symptoms. The information here is presented as a guide; it is important to discuss all symptoms with your neurologist and other health professionals. It is particularly important to discuss any change in bowel and bladder habits with your doctor. Some problems may be caused by an underlying illness, such as a urinary tract infection or an enlarged prostate, which is a common problem in men as they get older.

PSP is a rare neurological condition affecting the parts of the brain that control walking, eye movements, balance, speech and swallowing. PSP has a wide range of symptoms, but few people experience them all and symptoms vary from person to person. It is a progressive condition, meaning that the symptoms tend to worsen over time. However the severity and rate of symptom progression varies widely.

Bowel

Constipation is a common symptom of PSP, caused by the slowing and weakening of the bowel muscle and by lack of physical activity. Some of the medications used to treat the symptoms of PSP may also worsen constipation.

Strategies to avoid constipation include:

- Drink plenty of fluids – at least 8 glasses of water a day
- Eat plenty of fibre, which is found in fresh fruit and vegetables, or use a supplement such as psyllium husks
- Exercise regularly
- Develop a regular, unhurried time for visiting the toilet



*For PSP information and support phone
Parkinson's Australia on 1800 644 189*



If constipation continues, you may need to take a regular aperient (laxative). Your doctor or continence service will be able to discuss what is most appropriate. Always discuss any change in bowel habits with your doctor.

Bladder

PSP causes several bladder problems:

- **Urgency and frequency of urination** due to the interruption of the messages between the brain and the bladder.
- **Difficulty relaxing the bladder muscle** to let the urine out; it may be difficult to start the flow of urine or to empty out the bladder. This problem can cause dribbling incontinence or bladder infections, especially if some urine is retained in the bladder. Your doctor may order a bladder ultrasound to assess for this.
- **Frequency of urination at night (nocturia)**. This is related to a slight lowering of blood pressure during the day, when sitting. At night, when lying down, blood pressure becomes normal, causing increased blood flow to the kidneys, which can cause increased urine production.

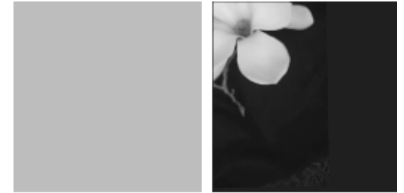
PSP also affects people's ability to move smoothly and easily. This can make actions such as standing, walking and sitting on the toilet difficult and slow.

Strategies to help promote urinary continence include:

- Drink at least 8 glasses of water a day.
- Avoid stimulants such as alcohol, tea and coffee, particularly in the evening.
- Wear clothing that is easy to remove, such as elastic waist bands or velcro fastenings.
- Seek advice and assistance from an occupational therapist with equipment such as grab rails, guide rails, raised toilet seats or a toilet frame.
- Seek advice and assistance from a continence service.

Medications are available to assist with severe cases of frequency of urination and nocturia. For more information, talk to your doctor, continence nurse or other health worker.





Managing continence problems

There are a range of aids and strategies to help manage continence problems:

- Bottles, pans or a portable commode can be kept nearby and may prove easier than struggling to the toilet.
- Absorbent pads are readily available in supermarkets and chemists. It is important to use a pad that fits snugly. A continence service may assist with advice on suitable products and with the cost of these products.
- Condom drainage for men involves fitting a specialised sheath like a condom over the penis, which collects the urine in a drainage bag strapped onto the man's leg.
- Catheters are only used if absolutely necessary. A catheter is a hollow tube which drains urine directly from the bladder into a drainage bag or is connected to a stop valve.

For further information, contact the **National Continence Helpline on 1800 33 00 66**. It is a free and confidential service that operates from 8.00am to 8.00pm (AEST) Monday to Friday. The Helpline is staffed by a team of experienced continence nurse advisors who provide information, education and advice to callers with incontinence or who are caring for someone with incontinence. The Helpline also provides information and advice to health professionals.

The **National Public Toilet Map** shows the location of more than 14,000 public and private public toilet facilities across Australia. Details of toilet facilities can be found along major travel routes and for shorter journeys as well. Useful information is provided about each toilet, such as location, opening hours, availability of baby change rooms, accessibility for people with disabilities and the details of other nearby toilets. Visit: www.toiletmap.gov.au

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PSP
Australia

For further information about living with PSP,
including the full range of PSP Australia Help Sheets,
visit: www.psp-australia.org.au

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