

Lesson one: Introduction

Absorbent products contain leaks of urine and / or stool and are helpful for people who have incontinence. Absorbent products can:

- Assist a person with incontinence by protecting their clothes and close environment
- Maintain a person’s dignity, comfort and quality of life.
- Be used short term or long term.

<p>Washable products - are washed and dried after each use</p>	<p>Single use products - are worn once, then thrown away</p>
<p>To use washable absorbent products, people need:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Water and soap for washing themselves and the products ✓ A place to wash and dry their laundry ✓ Time each day to wash their products ✓ A bucket with a lid for used products at home and a wet bag for used products when away from home. 	<p>To use single use absorbent products, people need</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Water and soap for washing themselves ✓ Consistent supply of single use products ✓ A dry place to store a stock of single use products ✓ Reliable rubbish disposal and collection system.

There are different types of washable and single use absorbent products but all products have three layers. These are:

1. **Top layer:** allows liquid to pass through to the absorbent layer and protects skin by keeping it dry
2. **Absorbent layer:** absorbs and contains urine and liquid from stool
3. **Waterproof layer:** protects the wearer’s clothing and close environment from leaks

Absorbent products may be suited to light, moderate or heavy leaks. TAP focuses on products suitable for moderate and heavy leaks.

Different types of absorbent products have different advantages and disadvantages. A person’s choice will depend upon:

- Their daily activities
- Their home, work and other environments
- Which products work best for their leaks
- The cost and availability of different products
- Personal preference.

Lesson two: Select

People may find it hard to discuss having leaks. Always consider what can you do to make it easier for them. A private place to talk is important.

Always make sure a person who has leaks sees a health professional for assessment of the reason for incontinence and advice on treatment or management.

During assessment:

- Check the person's bowel, bladder and skin health. Ask questions to find out if a person has a health condition that requires immediate referral to a health professional and / or would benefit from advice on healthy bladder, bowel or skin
- Find out about the type of incontinence the person has by asking them to describe:
- When leaks occur (day / night)
- How often leaks occur (occasional / frequent / constant)
- How heavy leaks are (light / moderate / heavy amount) and whether stool is mainly solid or liquid.
- Understand the person's environment, washing and/or disposal options by asking about:
- Their daily activities and whether they are at home, away from home or both
- If they would be able to wash and dry washable products
- How they may store and dispose of single use products.
- Check how the person will put on and off their products.
- Take measurements to estimate what size of product they will need for a good fit.

After gathering the above assessment information, make a plan with the person which includes:

- A list of the type of products they may need. They may need a different types of products to suit day, night and/or different activities.
- How many of each product they will need based on how often they are likely to need to change them each day
- If any referrals are needed
- Information you may need to teach the person (see step 4).

Lesson three: Fit

- It is important to check the fit of absorbent products as a product that fits well is less likely to leak.
- When checking the fit of absorbent products, use a private space. The person should wear their underwear.
- Check:
- Fit around a person's waist, hips and thighs.
- That the product is comfortable
- When adding extra absorbent pads, position the pads where the extra absorbency is most needed. This is different for males and females.

Lesson four: Use

A person will be more confident about using absorbent products when taught:

- How to put on, take off and plan for using away from home
- How to look after the products
- How to maintain a healthy bladder, bowel and skin.

Lesson five: Follow up

It can take time to work out the right product for a person. Early follow up may be important to check the product is working well. This could be done by telephone.

- Check the product is still meeting the person's needs
- Check the condition of the absorbent product.