

Client's Checklist

Successful continence management allows you to enter into a full and active life. A life that includes a happy sex life, good health and prevention of serious illness.

Today, most people with spina bifida live well into adulthood. Unfortunately, spina bifida never goes away. A successful lifestyle depends on you gaining the maximum amount of independence that you can.

Independence to study, work, form relationships and perhaps start a family.

To achieve independence, you must be able to manage your spina bifida. And a difficult aspect to manage is your incontinence. You should regularly attend a specialist clinic to keep well and to prevent problems from occurring. Prevention is the best way to stay well and happy.

Key issues for clients:

- Good organisation is the foundation for good continence management. **You** are the most important person in maintaining your health and happiness.
- To help you organise your daily, weekly and annual routines we recommend the use of a diary planner. These are available on this website along with a sample one year planner to assist you in creating your own routine.
- The major bladder management technique in spina bifida today is clean intermittent catheterisation (cathing).
- Keeping the bladder empty keeps you dry, prevents UTIs and prevents reflux.
- You must be constantly on the alert for the warning signs and symptoms which may indicate the presence of a UTI. Early detection of a UTI will keep you well and out of hospital. The best person to pick up UTI early is **you**.
- The commonest symptoms of a UTI are needing to go to the toilet often and pain when the urine comes out.
- UTIs must be managed quickly and effectively, usually with antibiotic tablets prescribed by your doctor. Be sure to finish the course of tablets completely.
- Regular monitoring of your urine system by you and your doctor is the key to staying well.
- Surgical procedures for improved bladder continence are constantly improving so it is worth keeping up to date by asking your urologist about developments when you visit. It is also one of the reasons you must have regular urological tests.
- The goal of effective bowel management is a routine that enables you to avoid bowel accidents, maintain stool consistency avoiding constipation and diarrhoea, and achieve social continence at work and at play.
- With a positive attitude, good organisational skills and making sure you regularly get advice from experts, you can effectively manage bowel incontinence.
- Constipation can occur very quickly in spina bifida and makes effective continence management impossible.
- Diet can be used effectively by some people to alter stool consistency and support bowel control.
- There are many techniques and methods for emptying bowels ranging from normal toileting to sophisticated surgical techniques.
- Tethered cord syndrome can occur at any age.
- Many people with spina bifida have great sex lives and many get married and have a family of their own.
- Improving continence is only one part of staying well if you have spina bifida. You also need to look after your health by keeping fit, not getting fat, and making sure that you attend a specialist spina bifida clinic to prevent problems.
- Stay physically active to keep your weight down. Sport and exercise, as well as keeping you active and slim, can be a major opportunity for social contact, peer support and meeting prospective partners. There are many different sporting activities possible for you including swimming and basketball.
- Skin problems are common in spina bifida, especially when you are in a wheelchair.
- Peer support is one of the most important ways in which you can learn to adopt healthy behaviour and take part in various activities. If you do not already belong to your local SBA - join now!