



# the INFORMER

YOUR CANADIAN CONTINENCE RESOURCE

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## Calling All the Ladies!

Initial findings of our women incontinence survey of little surprise

Welcome to our summer edition of *The Informer*. In this issue, we will be highlighting World Continence Week (WCW), which is the third week of June, and absorbent products and how they can most effectively be used.

Since our last issue, we have begun collecting data for our survey "Women's Understanding of Incontinence." While the data has not yet been tabulated and the final report will not be available until autumn, initial findings support the commonly held belief that urinary incontinence (UI) in women is far more prevalent than is usually reported. We have also discovered, which may come as no surprise to you, that many women do not understand the word "incontinence." Nor is there a definitive perception of the amount of leakage that determines one to be incontinent (for the record, any urinary leakage is incontinence and should be promptly investigated by a healthcare professional). We have also found that many people are unaware of the causes of urinary incontinence in women, such as childbirth and aging.

An in-depth look at these findings, and many additional insights into women's understanding of UI and its prevalence, will be available in the report on the TCCF website. We will be sending out an email notification when the report is available.

We are also looking for individuals who would be willing to share their story as Canadian Continence Foundation spokespersons on our website: [canadiancontinence.ca/english/spokesperson.html](http://canadiancontinence.ca/english/spokesperson.html). If interested, please send me an email: [jcahill@canadiancontinence.ca](mailto:jcahill@canadiancontinence.ca).

Wishing you all a wonderful summer,

Jacqueline Cahill  
Executive Director



Jacqueline Cahill

## Bladder Protection. Evolved. How to Choose What's Best for You...



**W**e are in unique times. A recent CBC News report stated that it is the first time in Canada's history where our senior citizens account for close to one-third of the population. Of the 32 million Canadians, 4.3 million are aged 65 or older. Looking back, in the 1996 census one out of every seven Canadians was a senior. Fifty years earlier, it was only about one in 14.

Of the more than 1.5 million Canadians experiencing urinary incontinence, one in five are seniors.

It is important to emphasize that incontinence is not a normal part of aging and can often be treated. Perceptions and attitudes are evolving. Conditions that only 10 years ago were perceived as taboo are now becoming normal conversations as society becomes more health conscious and continence support groups create awareness about treatment options.

### What is UI?

Urinary incontinence is full or partial loss of bladder control, resulting in the involuntary loss of urine. It may be only a few drops or it may be greater amounts. There are many factors that can lead to this condition including genetics, pregnancy, injuries, disease and degenerative changes. Consulting with a

medical professional is the best first step toward getting the help you need to resolve or improve your personal situation. Many styles of absorbent products are available to help you contain the urine loss effectively.

### With product protection, bigger is not always better...

Protection has evolved and large, bulky absorbent products are a thing of the past. Through

modern innovation, absorbent products are designed to be slimmer profiled, maximizing on discretion without compromising absorbency. New, more advanced super-absorbent microbeads effectively wick moisture away from the body in more discreet designs than ever before. Many products now offer odour control. The outcome is more comfort and security with less interruption to people's daily lives.

Dignity, discretion and dryness are fundamental considerations in the development of high-quality absorbent products. Consumer insights are vital for steering the direction of further product evolution as researchers work to help improve the quality of life for wearers.

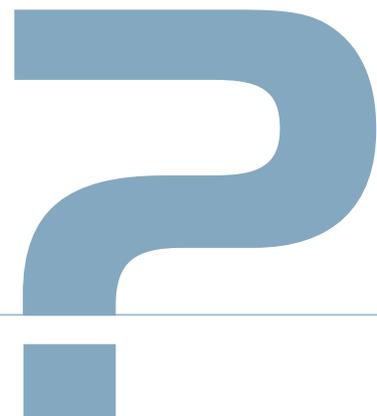


### Cost considerations:

Not all products are created equal. Low-cost products may not perform well enough to meet your needs or need to be changed so frequently that they interfere with your daily activities and actually cost you more overall.

For light urinary incontinence consider lighter pad products. There is no need to spend money on a product that has more protection than you need. If you need light protection in the day, but more protection at night, use a light pad in the day and a more absorbent pad, protective underwear or brief at night.

Avoid layering products. The additional bulk may compromise the fit, resulting in discomfort and leakage.





The following chart provides some general indicators to assist you in beginning your search for the most suitable product for your unique needs:

Description	Urinary Incontinence Symptoms	Products to try
Stress Incontinence	You discover leakage occurs when doing the simplest things, like sneezing, coughing, or taking part in physical activity. Small amounts of urine loss.	 Light Pads  Male Guards
Urge Incontinence	You have frequent or sudden urge to urinate and then encounter leakage. Moderate to large amount of urine loss.	  Moderate to Heavy Pads  Protective Underwear
Mixed Incontinence	A combination of both of the above. It is fairly common to have more than one symptom.	  Light to Heavy Pads   Protective Underwear
Overflow Incontinence	You experience spontaneous or continuous leakage. Feeling of fullness even after emptying bladder. Having to urinate in small amounts on a regular basis.	  Light to Heavy Pads   Protective Underwear
Functional Incontinence	You are simply not physically able to get to a washroom in enough time. You may be experiencing problems with mobility due to a physical condition.	  Moderate to Heavy Pads   Protective Underwear

## Incontinence products are NOT a “one solution-fits-all” scenario

They are as unique and varied as you are. Things have certainly changed in the past 10 years. Choice is no longer limited. Many styles, sizes and absorbencies are available just like clothing.

## Have more than one product in your wardrobe for protection



You spend time each day choosing your clothing according to your needs; why not also consider your bladder protection the same way? Viewing protection products as an extension of your wardrobe allows you to select the right absorbent

product for the right occasion. Some products even come in gender specific designs.

Products should be in tune with your lifestyle. Your choice may change based on the day you have planned. If your day is a busy one, or you are travelling, your protection choice may need to be more absorbent. At home, a lighter product may suffice. Choosing correctly will provide greater confidence and more peace of mind.

## A few words about incontinence and skin



Exposure to urinary residue in delicate areas can leave skin sore and irritated. It is important to cleanse and protect these areas with mild pH balanced products on a regular basis to help prevent chafing, discomfort and odour.

There is a vast array of skin care products designed to clean, moisturize and protect skin for a fresher, more comfortable feeling. Look for pH balanced “no-rinse” products with moisturizing properties that are easy to use. Packaging should be able to fit in a drawer or in a purse or bag when travelling.

## With so much to choose from, it can be confusing to know what products will best suit your needs

### If you need help:

- **1-800 Customer Support Line** to assist in consultation and where to purchase
- **Website Support** for product selection recommendations
- **Free Sampling** helps you to try before you buy
- **In Store Consultation.** If you prefer more face-to-face consultation, it is available at most home health care stores
- **TENA® Bathroom Finder.** To find a clean public washroom nearest to you at any time, try this new tool at [www.tena.ca](http://www.tena.ca).
- **[www.canadiancontinence.ca](http://www.canadiancontinence.ca).** Check your local directory

These services can help in narrowing down your search for absorbent products to suit your own unique and individual situation.

SCA Personal Care with its brand TENA® has been proudly serving Canadians for over 30 years and has assisted thousands of people in finding the right absorbent products for their individual needs across the country. For discreet consultation and FREE product samples, contact **TENA® Customer Care at 1-800-510-8023**. Visit our newly refreshed **TENA® website at: [www.tena.ca](http://www.tena.ca)** for product selection information and links to professional continence support organizations in the community.

SCA is a proud supporter of the Canadian Continence Foundation and the Canadian Nurse Continence Advisors Association.



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# President's Report

## Navigating the Journey to Successful Bladder Control

**M**y inadequate bladder control concerns arose when I was 14 years old, the result of an unexpected side effect of surgery. Excessive bleeding after the surgery damaged something that affects my bladder control and, ever since, I've been dealing with the kind of leaky plumbing that these days is called urge incontinence.

### There are several possible remedies for urge incontinence:

- Several drugs have been developed and approved for treatment of the condition. According to reports, these drugs help a lot of people. Under the direction of my urologist, I tried all of the drugs currently available, but their effect on my incontinence was minimal.
- Kegel exercises are another approach. These exercises aim to train the pelvic muscles to hold it when an urge to urinate strikes at an inconvenient moment or in an inappropriate place. I've been doing Kegel exercises for over 50 years and they do prolong successful holding time, to a limited degree. If I'm able to get to a bathroom within two or three minutes, everything is usually fine.
- Fluid intake management can also help. It's important to drink enough fluids to avoid dehydration. However, if you know that you're going to be away from home, you might want to avoid drinking anything before you go out. The idea is to drink when you know that you'll be near a bathroom, but not before going out, when a bathroom is potentially unavailable or hard to find.
- You can also try to retrain your bladder. The idea here is to set aside times when you know that you will have a bathroom nearby and then drink enough fluid to ensure that you are going to need to urinate. When the urge to urinate occurs, try to wait before using the bathroom. The goal is to gradually increase the length of time that you can hold it over a period of weeks or months. I have had limited success with this approach. When I'm at home and know that I can dash to the bathroom if I really need to, I can sometimes wait for quite a while. But if I'm away from home and know that it might take me five or 10 minutes to track down a bathroom, nervousness about the possibility of having an accident can reduce my holding time to nil.

"If you do a bit of research, you should be able to find a product that will enable you to do whatever you want whenever you want, without having to worry about having a visible accident."



Thomas Alloway

If you adopt a regimen that combines Kegel exercises with managing fluid intake and bladder retraining, you may discover that you are planning your life around managing your unruly bladder. This kind of regimen is often recommended for people who are living with incontinence, and some people appear to be willing to follow it on a long-term basis. However, I have more interesting and important things to do with my life than to devote a lot of time to managing my bladder.

Fortunately, wearing absorbent products, discussed elsewhere in this newsletter, can liberate you from the tyranny of a bladder that demands more time and effort than you want to invest in managing your leaky plumbing. A wide range of absorbent products is currently available from several companies. If you do a bit of research, you should be able to find a product that will enable you to do whatever you want whenever you want, without having to worry about having a visible accident.

The Internet has resources that will help you find peer support from others in similar situations. For example, these two Yahoo groups are for people living with incontinence: [health.groups.yahoo.com/group/AdultIncon](http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/AdultIncon) and [health.groups.yahoo.com/group/Incont](http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/Incont). In addition, the absorbent-product manufacturer Depend has a website with well-moderated discussion groups for men and women ([depend.com](http://depend.com)). Tena ([tena.com](http://tena.com)) also has a website with a lot of good information about the products that the company manufactures.

*Dr. Thomas Alloway, Ph.D.*  
President, TCCF

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# Bringing Incontinence into the Light

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It is pretty hard to ignore a disease like cancer. Awareness campaigns shout about it from the rooftops—how to prevent it, how to identify it early—and lots of funding gets directed toward research on risk factors, prevention and better treatments. Other conditions may not be in the spotlight and are only talked about in hushed tones, but they are nonetheless important and also need to be addressed. Incontinence, for example, is not necessarily life-threatening, but it is definitely life-affecting physically, psychologically and financially.

## The size of the problem

Incontinence is a chronic condition that affects an estimated 3.3 million Canadians, and that figure may be much higher yet, since it is based only on what gets reported. Unfortunately, incontinence is a widespread problem that is often underreported due to a lack of understanding about it, as well as shame and embarrassment on the part of sufferers.

Incontinence can be either urinary or fecal, although some people may suffer from both, which is known as “double incontinence.” Urinary incontinence (UI) is defined as involuntary leakage of urine. Fecal incontinence (FI) is the involuntary loss of liquid or solid stools causing social or hygienic inconvenience. One study found that UI may be transient in up to one-third of community-dwelling elderly and up to 50% of inpatients, depending on various risk factors. The prevalence of FI in community-living individuals is on average 5% and as high as 50% amongst the elderly in nursing homes.

Childbirth, hysterectomy and menopause can contribute to urinary incontinence; men with prostate cancer who have had prostatectomy can develop UI. Meanwhile, FI can result from a difficult vaginal birth, surgery of the anus and rectum, aging, chronic constipation and nervous system diseases such as stroke, multiple sclerosis and diabetes mellitus. FI is more common in women, particularly after menopause when women are affected by it eight to one compared to men.

## The high cost of suffering silently

Incontinence is not just uncomfortable, embarrassing or disruptive—it is also expensive. It can cost individuals \$1500 a year when considering expenses such as absorbent products, additional laundry and dry cleaning, toilet paper and paper towels, homecare services and medications not covered by healthcare plans. The Canadian Urinary Bladder Survey (CUBS 2003) showed that 21.8% of Canadians 18 or older have bladder problems, costing Canadians \$1.5 billion per year.

The cost to employers and the healthcare system is also significant. Employers shouldered almost nine million days of lost work and over \$1 billion in revenue. Furthermore, given a growing aging population, incontinence will become an even more common but grossly neglected problem. The cost of turning a blind eye to the condition is a much bigger blow to the healthcare system.

Consider that incontinence is a leading reason for institutionalization of the elderly. Indirectly, it can also lead to increased falls among the elderly in cases of frequent urination or urge incontinence that translates into middle-of-the-night bathroom trips. Institutionalization in itself can lead to incontinence—many elderly individuals develop incontinence in the first year of their stay.

## Going unrecognized and underreported

Incontinence is underreported primarily because of stigma and lack of knowledge about it. Patients are too embarrassed to bring it up, and physicians have limited knowledge about incontinence and what treatment options exist. A recent survey of family physicians revealed that almost half (46.0%) reported not having a clear understanding of urinary incontinence, while only about one-third (35.0%) of respondents felt very comfortable addressing incontinence. Moreover, depending how surveys are designed and how questions are asked (e.g., “Do you ever experience leakage?” versus “Do you suffer from incontinence?”), they can skew the data so that it underestimates the problem.

## More funding needed now

Insufficient funding for treatments and products is a huge impediment to managing incontinence, leaving those with the condition cash-strapped and lacking access to the newest, most effective treatments. Most drugs for overactive bladder (OAB) included on provincial regular formularies are older and some patients may complain of side effects. Generally, few treatments are covered by public or private health insurance and many new drugs for urinary incontinence are not on drug formularies, so individuals need to fully cover their treatment costs. Incontinence supplies are also not covered by provincial public or by most private health insurance plans.

The result? The cost of incontinence products can be overwhelming for many individuals, specifically those on a limited or fixed income like many seniors. As the prevalence of incontinence increases with age, seniors living on fixed incomes remain unable to take advantage of effective treatments because they lack the financial ability to pay out of pocket.

## Rousing policy makers to action

All of these issues underline the urgent need for greater advocacy, such as building public awareness and removing the taboo of incontinence to promote open and productive discussion, as well as educating healthcare professionals as early as in medical school. Action is also required to encourage sufferers to seek help instead of living with the problem silently, and to lobby the government to provide more funding and policy changes to enable people with incontinence to get the care they need.

**“Seeking treatment is more difficult than it should be, and individuals who actually speak up and seek medical help are saddled with long wait times.”**



### **Public and professional health education**

Raising public awareness would help destigmatize an otherwise embarrassing and private condition. Just as we have begun to dialogue openly about colon cancer and erectile dysfunction, it should be possible to bring incontinence into the light so we can properly address the problem. Part of the education effort would be to inform people about treatment options and products available, as well as explaining healthcare coverage. More quality information with Canadian-specific content in consumer-friendly language would be helpful.

### **Including incontinence in wait-time strategy**

Seeking treatment is more difficult than it should be, and individuals who actually speak up and seek medical help are saddled with long wait times. For example, a patient identified with having stress urinary incontinence (SUI) may wait six to nine months to see a specialist, another four to six months for proper assessment and possibly up to two years to receive the surgical treatment that they require. The Canadian Continence Foundation (TCCF) is urging policy makers to include urinary incontinence, and stress urinary incontinence in particular, in the National Wait Times Strategy. The 10-year plan created by the federal government is aimed at strategically

reducing wait times for access to care for conditions, such as cancer, heart disease, diagnostic imaging, joint replacement and sight restoration services.

### **Increased government funding**

TCCF has been asking the government to increase funding in several areas, such as offering more cost-effective surgical procedures, providing equal access to treatments across the country, the creation of community-based incontinence clinics and funding public and professional education efforts. TCCF would also like to see all drugs (old and new) added to provincial formularies, funding for the purchase of absorbent products for those individuals living on fixed incomes, funding for the purchase of catheters for individuals living in the community and an increased daily funding allotment for absorbent products in long-term care facilities

Incontinence is a highly common chronic condition that affects the lives of many Canadians, but it does not have to eat away at their quality of life through neglect. Those who suffer from it do not have to idly accept it as a problem that cannot be helped because there are actually many solutions available. A variety of products and treatments, as well as a host of management techniques, can make life with incontinence much easier.

# Celebrating World Continence Week

Educating and raising awareness around the globe



Millions around the world suffer with urinary incontinence (UI). Unfortunately, most will continue to suffer in silence due to the taboo nature of this topic. UI continues to be underreported, underdiagnosed and undertreated. Increasing global awareness around this common disorder will help take UI “out of the water closet.” 2011 marks the third year of the International Continence Society’s World Continence Week (WCW). Held during the third week in June (June 20–26, 2011), WCW has been celebrated since 2009.

Many parts of the world—particularly third world countries—are still trying to break the urinary and fecal incontinence taboo. The Continence Promotion Committee (CPC) is striving to break this barrier of silence. The aim of WCW is “to raise awareness of bladder and bowel issues and improve the lives of people with incontinence worldwide by drawing the attention of the general public and the global medical community to the life situation of people with incontinence.” Each year the CPC discusses ways to increase viability and visibility of WCW. They encourage patient advocacy groups and organized events, particularly in less fortunate countries, across the world.

This week is not meant to replace the respective countries local/national awareness campaigns, but supplement those campaigns in increasing awareness globally. Canada has celebrated Incontinence Awareness Month in November for many years now and that is unlikely to change. Many local and national initiatives were held in Canada to celebrate WCW 2010. These included Nurse Continence Advisors across the country performing educational events in the form of presentations to senior groups, public forums, display booths at pharmacies and even a fashion show.

It is hoped that WCW will create media coverage and assist less fortunate countries with continence promotion and coordination of activities. The International Continence Society (ICS)

and CPC help to provide advice and coordination of this event. Resources, in the form of advertising materials and links to the ICS website, are also available, as well as a poster to advertise WCW.

Besides Canada’s involvement, activities in the United States, Japan, Singapore, Poland, Australia, Germany, Italy and Egypt—just to name a few participating countries—have been organized in years past. China held their first WCW in 2010 and the event included a press conference attended by 30 members of the media, including China Central TV.

As we strive to create awareness around this medical taboo, we all need to work together as one large group to help individuals around the world understand that UI is a medical condition that can be assessed, managed, treated and, very often, cured.

## World Continence Week Events

### Ontario

- June 21, 1000-1400, Information Booth at Senior’s Health and Information Fair, Dundas Lions Memorial Community Centre, 10 Market Street, Dundas, ON
- June 22, 1400-1600, Information Booth at Successful Aging Open House, St. Peter’s Hospital, 88 Maplewood Avenue, Hamilton, ON
- June 25, 1000-1400, Information Booth at Health Fair, West Park Health Centre, 103 Pelham Road, St. Catharines, ON

### Saint John

Celebration of World Continence Week, “Getting your Bladder Healthy,” June 21–23 from 9:00am to 3:00pm.

Display set-up and Nurse Continence Advisors for personal assessment and teaching. All are welcome. St Joseph’s Hospital, 130 Bayard Drive, Saint John, New Brunswick

### Winnipeg

World Continence Week Event, Wednesday, June 22 at 2:00pm. Display set-up for staff and visitors all week. Riverview Health Centre — Thomas Sill Auditorium, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

## Thanks to our sponsors

The Canadian Continence Foundation is grateful for the support of the following organizations:



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