



# Florida REACH Project

## Resources for Enhancing Alzheimer's Caregiver Health

### Prescription for Bathroom Accidents

#### Overall Goal of this Prescription:

Please remember that dealing with challenging behaviors can be stressful. The brief relaxation strategies will help you deal with stress when dealing with this challenge. In particular, we recommend using the signal breath technique immediately before you use the strategies suggested in this behavioral prescription.

#### Strategies for preventing a challenging behavior from occurring (try picking one thing and sticking with it for a few weeks):

**1. Check with your Primary Care Physician. (Do this first.)**

**2. Begin your loved one on a toilet schedule**

- Toileting should be a standard procedure first thing in the morning, after meals and bedtime. Create a routine. It would be really helpful if you could write down the times when your loved one relieves his/her bladder.
- Take your loved one to the toilet every 2 hours. If he/she doesn't need to go, say you will be back in 1 hour to check again.
- If your loved one doesn't want to go, guide him/her to the bathroom using step-by-step instructions.
- Remember to approach him/her from the front and begin each routine by announcing who you are and saying something comforting. For example, "Hello dear, I am your spouse/child, [Name]. I want to help you get to the bathroom. Please stand up".
- Remember to use warm and friendly actions (e.g., smile, soft touches).
- Encourage your loved one to perform the tasks, but offer minimal amount of help that is needed.
- Only keep your loved one in the bathroom 10 minutes if he/she does not use the toilet.

**3. Dress your loved one in manageable clothing**

- Keep the person's dress simple and practical
- Instead of choosing clothing with zippers and buttons, chose easy-to-remove and easy-to-clean styles such as sweat pants with elastic, waistbands or Velcro.

**4. If the problem persists try using an adult brief or a "depend" when accidents occur.**

**5. Keep a record for at least one week of the times your loved one is wet and dry.**

- From this information, we can work with you to find a pattern, for example if your loved one is wet every 4 hours, and then we will suggest that you take the diagnosed person to the bathroom every 3-1/2 hours.



**Other strategies for preventing a behavior from occurring:**

**Strategies for guiding how you respond during or after a behavior occurs:**

1. Tell your loved one in a calm manner that he/she should try to get all the way to the toilet before going to the bathroom. Giving him/her this type of feedback every time an accident occurs may make him more likely to get to the toilet in the future.
2. Avoid showing your anger or frustrations when an accident happens. This will only cause confusion and distress. In a calm voice, announce who you are and continue to prompt and announce each step to get your loved one to change clothes. It is the disease that makes the person not able to get to the bathroom, not that he/she is trying to be difficult.
3. Help your loved one retain a sense of dignity despite the problems with incontinence. Reassuring and supportive statements will help lessen feelings of embarrassment that way you will feel more in control of the situation.

**Other strategies:**

**General Information:**

You are a dedicated caregiver and you are doing a great job. We understand that this problem can be very upsetting to you and are committed to helping you with this challenge. We believe these strategies will help and look forward to working with you in the coming weeks.

Remember that you can reach out to the social workers on your team if you have any questions or concerns.