

Continence and Confidence

An evidence-informed guide from Strength With Purpose



For many people, bladder urgency or continence issues are not just a “bathroom problem.” They can begin to affect confidence, sleep, mobility, social activities, exercise, and even the willingness to leave the house.

Some people start planning outings around toilet access. Others become anxious about long drives, unfamiliar places, or getting to the toilet in time.

Many simply try to manage the issue on their own.

But continence issues are common — and often more complex than people realise.

It’s Not Always Just “Weak Pelvic Floor Muscles”

One of the most common messages people hear online is:

“Just do pelvic floor exercises.”

For some people, pelvic floor strengthening may form part of the solution.

But continence issues can have many different contributing factors, including:

- prostate enlargement in men
- pelvic floor dysfunction
- medications
- constipation
- bladder irritation
- neurological conditions
- mobility limitations
- balance difficulties
- pain or stiffness
- disrupted sleep and night-time rushing

- difficulty getting to the toilet quickly enough.

Sometimes the issue is not simply bladder control itself.

Sometimes it is reduced mobility, fear of falling, difficulty standing quickly, poor balance when rushing, or changes in movement confidence.

This is one reason why a “one size fits all” solution is often unhelpful.

Why Assessment Matters

Two people can experience very similar symptoms while having very different underlying causes.

That’s why self-diagnosis can become frustrating.

Many people feel embarrassed discussing the issue, repeatedly try generic online advice, or assume nothing can be done.

But continence issues are often multifactorial, meaning several factors may be contributing at the same time.

Proper assessment helps identify what may be driving the problem, which factors are most important, and what type of support may actually help.

Perhaps the real issue simply hasn’t been identified yet.

The “Key in the Door” Effect

Some people notice urgency suddenly increases when they arrive home and reach the front door.

This is sometimes referred to as the “key in the door” effect.

The brain begins linking certain environmental cues and routines with the expectation of toileting, which can increase the sensation of urgency.

Experiences like this can feel embarrassing or confusing, but they are more common than many people realise.

Why This Matters

When urgency or continence concerns begin affecting confidence, people may start to avoid outings, reduce physical activity, rush unsafely, wake multiple times overnight, rely heavily on nearby toilets, or withdraw socially.

Over time, this can affect independence and quality of life.

Night-time rushing in particular may increase falls risk, especially if balance, vision, strength, or mobility are already reduced.

Where To Seek Help

If continence issues are affecting your confidence, daily activities, or quality of life, it is worth discussing them with a qualified health professional.

Support may include your GP, continence clinics, continence nurses, pelvic health physiotherapists, or specialist pelvic floor services.

If you wish to attend a public hospital continence clinic, you will generally need a referral from your GP.

Examples of public services in Sydney include:

- Concord & Canterbury Specialist Community Continence Service
- Northern Sydney Local Health District Continence Clinic
- St George Hospital Pelvic Floor Unit.

The Continence Foundation of Australia also provides a directory to help locate continence services and advisors near your area.

A Useful Reframe

Continence concerns are health issues, and as with any health issue people should not feel embarrassed seeking help.

And while exercise and movement may help support mobility, confidence, balance, and general function, the best approach depends on understanding what is actually contributing to the problem.

Seeking help is often the first step toward improving confidence, safety, and quality of life.

Important note

This information is general in nature and not a substitute for personalised medical advice. If bladder urgency, continence concerns, pain, or changes in bladder or bowel function are affecting your daily life, seek guidance from a qualified health professional.