



BAI Beacon

*The Newsletter from Family and Community Services
Made possible by generous donations to Banner Alzheimer's Foundation*

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Beacon Bits

GPS Lecture: Staying Afloat with the Changing Roles and Relationships in Dementia

Join the expert panel from BAI and discover adjustments you may need to make to preserve relationships, while maintaining a sense of self and well-being.

Friday, Sept. 13, 10:30 a.m. - noon
Musical Instrument Museum
4725 E. Mayo Blvd.
Free but registration is required.
Call (602) 230-CARE to register.

Memory Assistance and Planning Session (MAPS)

This full-day workshop assists families in the care of people with moderate to advanced dementia.

Tuesday, September 17, 8:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.
Foundation for Senior Living
Caregiver House
1201 E. Thomas Road, Phoenix
\$40 per person for BAI Family;
\$60 per person non-BAI Family
for instruction, materials,
breakfast and lunch.
Call (602) 839-6850 to register

COMPASS Class for Caregivers

This class is a 90-minute overview of progression of dementia and strategies for successful caregiving.

Thursday, Sept.-19, 10 – 11:30 a.m., OR
Monday, Sept. 30, 4 – 5:30 p.m.
Banner Alzheimer's Institute,
Third Floor Conference Room
901 E. Willetta Street, Phoenix
Free but registration required.
Call (602) 839-6850 to register.

Managing Incontinence

As Alzheimer's disease/related dementia progresses to the moderate and advanced stages, there will likely be issues involving loss of bladder and bowel control, also known as incontinence. The person's brain is receiving signals of the need to "go," but their memory of how to carry out toileting becomes confused due to:

- Diminished recognition of the need to go to the toilet.
- Inability to wait until it is appropriate to go to the toilet.
- Delay in using the toilet due to distraction or involvement in other activities.
- Difficulty manipulating clothing (e.g. zippers, belts, underwear) before toileting.
- Problems communicating the need to toilet.
- Difficulty in finding and/or using the toilet.
- Seeing self in a mirror in the bathroom and misinterpreting for another person, thus leaving bathroom.

Incontinence is not only distressing for the caregiver, but is very uncomfortable and even embarrassing for the person with dementia. However, it is also important to remember that people with dementia are susceptible to other causes of incontinence, such as infection, constipation, hormonal changes and prostate enlargement. Many of these conditions are treatable, so the first step is always to consult the doctor to obtain a full medical assessment and find out why the incontinence is occurring. If medical conditions have been excluded, then it is time for caregivers to begin other strategies.

One of the easiest ways to prevent urine accidents is to prompt the person to use the toilet routinely. Many caregivers will start a schedule such as getting the person to the toilet upon rising in the morning; following breakfast; before lunch and dinner; and again at bedtime. Others may need more frequent reminders such as every two hours throughout the daytime. Some individuals may only need a verbal cue while others will need to be led to the toilet. Remember to cue with words that are familiar with toileting, such as "pee" or "tinkle." Recognizing the "behavioral expressions" of the need to go such as increased pacing, restlessness, fidgeting with clothing, etc., will also assist caregivers in successful toileting.

(Continued)

Managing Incontinence *(Continued)*

To prevent or minimize bowel accidents from occurring, the caregiver will need to learn the person's usual habits in order to prompt toileting around that same time of day or given activity. A cup of coffee can act as a bowel stimulant for many people, thus toileting immediately after breakfast is often successful. Fiber intake through favorite fruits, vegetables and/or over the counter supplements (e.g. chewable fiber tablets) can be helpful. Very gentle laxatives can be used, but caregivers must be on alert for action to take place!

Fluid intake is an important element in managing both bladder and bowel incontinence. Too little fluid will not only result in constipation, but will make the urine more concentrated and even stimulate the bladder muscle to contract causing incontinence. Too little fluid can also put the person at greater risk for developing a urinary tract infection (UTI), which will also result in incontinence. Just as the person needs reminders to toilet, so too will they need reminders for drinking fluid. Caregivers must prompt sips of fluid throughout the day or provide snacks with more fluid such as ice cream, popsicles, melons, Jell-O, applesauce, etc. Sometimes a large glass of fluid will be overwhelming for the person, so giving a smaller juice-size cup may be easier to prompt completion of fluid intake.

Clothing to promote independence during toileting should also be considered. Velcro tape or elastic waistbands make pulling pants/trousers up and down much easier. For ladies, wearing a dress/skirt may create more ease. Select clothing that is washable and does not need ironing should accidents occur.

If the person does not like to stay seated on the toilet, consider distraction and positioning techniques. Favorite music playing in the bathroom may help them sit longer or giving a picture book, magazine or something to hold may add the few extra minutes that are needed to "take care of business." Consider that the person may not be comfortable on the toilet and may need a raised toilet seat or a padded toilet seat for sore hip/tail bones. Sometimes a child's padded toilet insert seat provides just the right amount of comfort.

Skin care is also important as both urine and stool contain acids that can be hard on the skin. If the person becomes soiled even in a disposable brief, clean the skin as soon as possible. Consider using baby wipes or "no rinse soap products" that can be purchased at a drugstore and added to a moist washcloth. When the person's skin looks red or irritated, consider using creams or ointments that contain zinc oxide, lanolin, or petrolatum that form a protective barrier on the skin. Ask your health care provider for suggestions.

Finally, disposable briefs and other protective garments/products will likely be needed. Early on, placing a disposable pad in the person's underwear may suffice. Over time, pull up disposable briefs will be needed. Nighttime can create unique issues as the caregiver wants the person to sleep through the night. There are products that provide for heavy coverage during the night and protective washable or disposable pads that can protect the linens. It is important to research various products and ask for advice for the unique issues that each person faces. A local company, Comfort Plus, provides telephone, in store and online advice to help select/try products (www.comfortplusonline.com).

While incontinence is not a pleasant situation, it can be managed successfully; but will need time and patience to find the best approaches and solutions.



Our Mission

To end Alzheimer's disease without losing a generation, to set a new standard of care for patients and their families, and to forge a model of collaboration in biomedical research.

To make a gift in support of
Banner Alzheimer's Institute, visit:

www.banneralz.org/waystogive

or call

602-747-4483.



Ask The Expert

Jan Dougherty, RN, MS

Director, Family and Community Services

Dear Jan:

My husband has been having more incontinence episodes during the day and is resistant to wearing a disposable brief. This has become a source of contention between the two of us. In addition, problems with urine loss are even worse at night. If he wakes up and needs to go, he is often confused and can't find the bathroom, much less the toilet. So, I find myself either cleaning the floors or washing all of the sheets almost every morning. This is really wearing me down. What suggestions do you have to make life better for both of us?

Signed,

Donna

Dear Donna:

Incontinence is certainly challenging for caregivers as this is new territory for most and logical attempts to get the person to cooperate aren't always successful. In regards to handling accidents during the day, I'd suggest that you remove all of your husband's underwear from his drawer and replace them with disposable pull-up briefs. You can also try purchasing a washable brief that you insert a disposable pad. There are now even boxer shorts that have a built in place for disposable pads! Once again, if you choose that route, replace the new briefs with his usual underwear. When he insists that these "aren't his," be matter of fact and tell him that this is all you have to use for now and you will take care of the situation later. Generally, within a few days, your husband will forget about the old underwear and adapt to the new. This will give him the protection he needs during the day to maximize his dignity and comfort while minimizing your laundry.

A couple of suggestions for nighttime; first be sure to have him use the bathroom right before going to bed. You might consider purchasing a urinal or bedside commode. When he wakes to use the toilet, it may be easier for you to direct/help him either use the urinal or bedside commode. Make sure there is adequate lighting to help him see what he is doing.

There are likely to be nights that he either sleeps through the incontinence episode or waits too long to go. Protecting your bed linens to minimize laundry is a must. A couple of options are available and include purchasing disposable underpads or a washable underpad for the bed. I'd recommend that you purchase the most absorbent product you can which may cost a bit more. There are also pull up briefs that are more "heavy duty" than daytime products if you find his urine output is heavy during the night. When nighttime incontinence occurs, be sure that you are able to clean him up right away in the morning so to prevent any skin irritation. You may also need to consider use of a skin barrier cream/protector if his skin seems to be getting irritated.

While you can certainly purchase disposable products at local pharmacies or big box stores, I'd recommend doing your homework and connecting with a company that specializes in incontinence products as they are likely to allow you to try products first before buying things that will not work. With time and patience you will find the right products that work for both you and your husband.

Have a Question?

To submit your question for future consideration

email us at:

baiinfo@bannerhealth.com



Banner Alzheimer's Institute

Banner Health
901 East Willetta Street
Phoenix, AZ 85006

Beacon Bits *(Continued)*

COMPASS Class for West Valley

Friday, September 27, 10 – 11:30 a.m.,
Banner Sun Health Research Institute,
Morin Auditorium, Building B
10515 W. Santa Fe Drive, Sun City
Free but registration required.
Call (602) 230-CARE to register.

With Art in Mind

Every Thursday, Sept. 5, Sept. 12,
Sept. 19, and Sept. 26, 12:30 – 2 p.m.
Banner Alzheimer's Institute,
First Floor Education Center
901 E. Willetta Street, Phoenix
Registration encouraged.
\$10 per person payable at the door.
Call (602) 839-6850
for more information.

GPS Lecture:

When Will We Find Effective Treatment for AD?

Friday, October 11, 10:30 a.m. - noon,
Banner Sun Health Research Institute,
Morin Auditorium, Building B
10515 W. Santa Fe Drive, Sun City
Free but registration required.
To register, call (602) 230-CARE.

Memory Screening Event

FREE 30-minute memory screening by appointment
Friday, October 25, 9 a.m. - 1 p.m.
Banner Alzheimer's Institute,
901 E. Willetta Street, Phoenix
To schedule an appointment
Call (602) 230-CARE.

Brain Health Tip:

Most people love to multitask to increase productivity. However, too much multitasking may actually diminish mental productivity, increase brain fatigue and stress, interfere with sleep patterns and even alter the immune system. So, limit multitasking when you can and see it as another important step in improving overall brain fitness!