

# Continence Supports

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**Quick summary:** Incontinence happens when you can't control your bladder or bowel movements. Continence supports are products you use every day to manage your incontinence, such as pads or bed protectors. Continence supports could include support from someone to help you manage your continence.

The Australian health system may provide continence supports. We can only fund these supports if they are related to your disability.

We may fund continence supports if you have occasional or regular incontinence because of your disability. For children, we may be able to fund continence supports if it relates to your child's disability or developmental delay.

We can also fund a professional to train someone to help you with your continence supports. We only fund these supports if you can't manage your continence because of your disability.

**Note:** when we say 'your plan' we mean your NDIS plan. If you're looking for information about your Community Connections plan, go to [Our Guideline – Community Connections](#).

If you're looking for information about your child's early connections plan, go to [Our Guideline – Early Connections](#).

## What's on this page?

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You might also be interested in:

- [Disability-related health supports](#)
- [Mainstream and community supports](#)
- [Would we fund it guide - continence consumables](#)

- [Would we fund it guide - early childhood continence consumables](#)

## What do we mean by continence supports?

Continence supports are what we call disability-related health supports. We can only fund these supports if they directly relate to your disability and help you undertake activities involved in day-to-day life.<sup>1</sup> Learn more about [what we mean by disability-related health supports](#).

Continence supports are products or help from someone to manage incontinence. Incontinence is the inability to control when you have to go to the toilet. It is the accidental or involuntary loss of:

- urine from your bladder – known as urinary incontinence
- faeces from your bowel – known as faecal incontinence.

Incontinence can range from mild to severe. It may be a small bladder or bowel leak. Or complete loss of bladder or bowel control.

If you have incontinence you should talk to your doctor first. They can link you to health services that are paid for through Medicare. You can continue to access health services from Medicare, even when you are a NDIS participant. Learn more about the [help you can get through the health system or other services](#).

Continence products can include things like pads, nappies, bed protection, liners and shields. If you have a catheter or stoma, it can be products you need, such as bags for waste, bottles and straps. A catheter is a flexible tube inserted into the body to drain the bladder into a bag you wear when it doesn't empty normally. A stoma connects a portion of your digestive system or sometimes your bladder to the surface of your abdomen to remove waste into a sealed bag you wear.

You may not be able to manage your continence because your disability means you have trouble doing this on your own. Family, friends or carers may help you with your daily continence needs. Or your continence supports may include a support worker or nurse to help with this. You may need support from a specific type of health professional for some tasks. For example, some types of catheters can only be changed by a registered nurse.

Continence supports can also include training for people to help you manage your continence. A suitably qualified health professional needs to provide the training. For example, a registered nurse trains a support worker to help clean or manage your catheter or stoma and products for you.

We can only fund continence supports that are directly related to the functional impact of your disability. This means the things you can and can't do because of your disability.

## What help can you get to manage incontinence through the health system or other services?

You may be able to get continence supports from the Australian [health system](#) or another provider. If another service is most appropriate to fund continence supports or they are not related to your disability, we can't fund them.

If you have permanent and severe incontinence, the Continence Aids Payment Scheme may help you pay for some of the continence products you use. If you are eligible for the Continence Aids Payment Scheme you'll get a yearly payment to help you meet your continence support needs. If you have continence supports funded in your NDIS plan, you won't generally be eligible for funding under the Continence Aids Payment Scheme. To learn more and apply for this payment, go to the [Continence Aids Payment Scheme](#).

Government and community services must make sure all Australians, including people with disability, have access to their supports. We call these supports mainstream and community supports. The NDIS was set up to work alongside government and community services, not replace them. Learn more about [Mainstream and community supports](#).

### What support can you get through Medicare?

Medicare helps all Australians with the costs of their health care. This includes funding for services to test for and diagnose incontinence and continence supports while you are in hospital. Medicare may also fund some short term supports you get from allied health professionals.

Learn more about [Medicare](#).

### What support can you get through the Pharmaceuticals Benefits Scheme?

You may need some medications to help you deal with your continence needs including suppositories and enemas. The Pharmaceuticals Benefits Scheme provides funding for most medications, so we don't fund them. If you need any medication, you should speak to your doctor or pharmacist.

Learn more about the [Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme](#).

### What other support can you get if you have a stoma?

If you have a stoma, the [Stoma Appliance Scheme \(SAS\)](#) offers free stoma products and appliances you might need. The [Australian Council of Stoma Associations](#) has information about how to apply to the SAS.

Once you are a member of a stoma association, you can get stoma products and appliances through the SAS. We may fund your membership fees for a stoma association. We will only do this if your stoma is related to your disability.

## How do we decide what continence supports we fund?

All NDIS funded supports must meet the [NDIS funding criteria](#).

We can fund continence supports for you if you need them ongoing and they're related to your disability. We'll need evidence to support this, such as reports or assessments from a continence nurse or other qualified health professional.

Continence supports are one type of the disability-related health supports we may fund.

Learn more about [how we decide what disability-related health supports we fund](#).

## What types of continence supports do we fund?

### What continence products can we fund?

If you have urinary or faecal incontinence because of your disability, we may fund continence products. This can include:

- pads or nappies
- bedding or chair protection
- liners or shields
- anal plugs.

We may also fund continence products if you have a catheter because of your disability.

These products can include:

- collection bags
- bottles
- straps or tape.

If you have a stoma, you may be able to get stoma products and appliances through the [Stoma Appliance Scheme \(SAS\)](#).

Learn more about [What other support can you get if you have a stoma?](#)

We'll use reports from a continence nurse or other suitably qualified health professional to work out whether continence products meet the [NDIS funding criteria](#) for you. They can use

our [Continance Related Assistive Technology Assessment Template](#) or write their own report.

## What if you need help to manage your continence support needs?

You might be able to manage your continence needs yourself. Or you may need help to use continence products. You may also need help to clean or change your catheter or stoma if you have these.

A continence nurse can do a continence assessment to help work out what continence supports you need. This includes:

- preparing your continence plan
- working out the continence products you need
- completing reviews of your continence plan.

We may fund this assessment if your incontinence is ongoing and directly related to your disability.

The types of support you need will vary based on your individual continence support needs and who can help you.

You may need help to manage your continence support needs because of your disability. In this case, we may fund a nurse or support worker to help manage your continence. For example, to clean a stoma and change the bag if your disability means you are not able to.

You may need support from a specific type of health professional for some of your disability-related continence support needs. In this situation, we may fund the health professional to help with these supports. For example, we might fund a registered nurse to change your catheter. Or we may fund an enrolled nurse to help with cleaning your catheter.

A registered nurse or other qualified health professional may be able to train other people to help you manage your continence needs for some supports. This could be family, friends, a carer or a support worker. We may be able to fund their training in your individual continence needs.

## What about continence supports for children?

Children and young people with disabilities or developmental delay often need help with toileting daily. You, your family or carers will generally look after your child's daily toileting support needs. We may fund support if your child needs more help than other children of the same age, without a disability or developmental delay.

Learn more about development delay in Our Guideline about our [early childhood approach](#).

For children 5 years of age or older we may fund:

- continence supports for use throughout the day
- continence supports at night when toilet trained during the day – for example nappies
- a bed wetting alarm which a continence nurse may recommend.

We can only fund these supports if we have evidence they are related to your child's disability or developmental delay. Evidence can include a continence assessment. The assessment must be completed by a continence nurse or other suitably qualified health professional.

In rare situations we may include funding for continence supports for children younger than 5 for disability-related medical conditions. This may include if we have evidence your child will always need help to manage their continence due to their disability-related medical condition. For example, if your child uses disposable urinary catheters.

We can only fund these supports if they meet the [NDIS funding criteria](#) for your child. Learn more in our Would we fund it guides for [continence](#) and [early childhood continence](#).

## How do you get continence supports in your plan?

### Do you need to provide us with evidence?

Yes. To get continence supports in your plan, you need to give us evidence that helps us understand the disability related supports you need. Talk to your My NDIS contact or support coordinator to work out what evidence we need to fund your continence supports. Learn more about the [evidence we need before we create your plan](#).

You can give us any new information or evidence about your support needs when you get it or anytime we talk with you.

We'll ask you, your parent or carers to explain how your disability affects your ability to manage your continence. We'll check you've had a continence assessment and ask to see it. We know this can be a sensitive topic, we only ask for this information to make sure we understand your continence support needs.

When you're ready, we'll discuss what continence products or supports you currently use and how often you use them. We'll ask who helps you with these supports and if this is your choice. We'll check if you would like someone else to provide this support instead.

We'll use this information and any assessments or reports to decide if continence supports meet the [NDIS funding criteria](#). If they do, we'll work out the amount of funding for continence supports to include in your plan.

If your continence support needs change you should also [contact us](#). Let us know of new reports or assessments you have. If we decide your plan isn't meeting your needs, we can do a plan reassessment.

Learn more about [changing your plan](#).

## What if you don't agree with our decision?

If we decide continence supports don't meet our [NDIS funding criteria](#), we can't include them in your plan.

We'll give you written reasons why we made the decision.<sup>2</sup> You can [contact us](#) if you'd like more detail about the reasons for our decision.

If you don't agree with a decision we make about continence supports, you can ask for an internal review of our decision.<sup>3</sup> You'll need to ask for an internal review within 3 months of getting your plan.<sup>4</sup> Learn more about [reviewing our decisions](#).

## What happens once you have continence support funding in your plan?

Once you have continence support funding in your plan you can use it to get the continence products or help you need. Your plan will describe how you can use the funding in your plan comments. The comments will be next to the funding budget in your plan.

If you need help to use the funding, talk to your My NDIS contact or your support coordinator. Learn more in [Our Guideline – Your Plan](#). You can also go to [What happens once you have Disability-related health support funding in your plan?](#)

## Reference List

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<sup>1</sup> NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules r 7.4.

<sup>2</sup> NDIS Act s100(1).

<sup>3</sup> NDIS Act s100.

<sup>4</sup> NDIS Act s100(2).