

Continence supports

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 can provide continence supports. We may fund continence supports as an NDIS support for you if they relate to your disability. For children, we may be able to fund continence supports as an NDIS support, if they relate to your child's disability or developmental delay. We may also fund a professional to train someone to help you with your continence supports.

Note:

- When we say 'your plan', we mean your NDIS plan.
- As part of the recent changes to the NDIS laws we are moving towards a new framework for planning. Rules need to be developed for this new framework. We're working on how and when we'll introduce these changes.

Until then, the information in this Our Guideline is about our 'old framework' for planning, which includes the legislative changes that became operational when the law commenced. All current plans will be known as 'old framework' plans, and we will continue to develop these until all participants have transitioned to the new framework.

What's on this page?

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You might also be interested in:

- [Disability-related health supports](#)
- [Mainstream and community supports](#)
- [What does NDIS fund?](#)
- [Continence provider list](#)
- [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 products, or help from someone, to manage incontinence. Incontinence is the inability to control when you have to go to the toilet. It's 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 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 supports are what we call disability-related health supports. We can only fund these NDIS supports if they relate to your disability and help you do activities involved in day-to-day life.¹

Learn more about [what we mean by disability-related health supports](#).

Continence products can include things like pads, nappies and bed protection.

If you have a catheter or stoma, it can be products you need, such as bags for waste, bottles and straps.

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

The [Australian health system](#) provides continence support services that are available to everyone, whether or not they have a disability.

The 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 the Continence Aids Payment Scheme?

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're eligible for the Continence Aids Payment Scheme, you'll get a yearly payment to help you meet your continence support needs. Learn more and apply for this payment at [Continence Aids Payment Scheme](#).

If you have continence supports funded in your NDIS plan, you won't generally be eligible for funding under the Continence Aids Payment Scheme.

You can also contact the [National Continence Helpline](#) for information, advice and support about incontinence from a nurse continence specialist. This free and confidential Helpline is run by the Australian Department of Health.

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 and diagnose incontinence, and continence supports while you're 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 Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme?

You may need medications to help you deal with your continence needs, including suppositories and enemas. The Pharmaceutical 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 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're a member of a stoma association, you can get stoma products and appliances through the SAS.

How do we decide what continence supports we fund?

The laws for the NDIS determine what we can and can't fund. Things we can fund are called NDIS supports. You can use the funding in your plan to buy NDIS supports if they are related to your disability and are in-line with your plan.²

Like other NDIS supports, we can only include continence supports in your plan if they meet all the [NDIS funding criteria](#).

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

What types of continence supports do we fund?

Continence products that are NDIS supports³ include products for urinary or faecal incontinence, such as:

- 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, including:

- collection bags
- bottles
- straps or tape.

If we fund continence products in your plan, we'll fund standard postage costs for delivery.

We may fund other supports relating to your continence, including:

- supports and services to manage your continence, such as continence assessments and reviews by a continence nurse or other qualified health professional
- training for support workers, family and friends to support you with your continence where appropriate.

Learn more about these supports in [What if you need help to manage your continence support needs?](#)

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

Continence supports that are not NDIS supports

We don't fund continence supports for health issues that are not related to your disability support needs.

Under NDIS laws, there are things we can't fund or provide.⁴

Learn more about [Supports that are not NDIS supports.](#)

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 your continence products. You may also need help to clean or change your catheter or stoma if you have these. We can fund supports if your incontinence relates to your disability.

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
- reviewing your continence plan.

The support we fund depends on your individual continence support needs and the person with the most appropriate skills to help you.

You may need support from a qualified health professional or support worker to manage your continence. We can fund a nurse to change or clean your catheter. Or a support worker to clean your stoma or change your stoma bag.

A support worker, family or friend may be able to provide some supports. We can fund a registered nurse or other qualified health professional to train them to support you with some of your continence needs.

Learn more about [who we will fund to support you](#) with your continence needs.

What about continence supports for children?

Children and young people with disability or developmental delay often need help every day with toileting. You, your family, or carers will generally look after your child's daily toileting support needs. We may fund continence supports in your child's plan if they need substantially more help with continence supports than a child of the same age who doesn't have a disability⁵ or developmental delay. We can only fund these supports if they meet the [NDIS funding criteria](#) for your child.

If your child needs a disability-related health support, we'll think about:

- your child's individual situation
- your capacity to provide support and any risks to your wellbeing if you provide support
- what informal supports are available
- what is reasonable for family and informal supports to provide
- what [mainstream and community supports](#) are available.

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

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

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

In rare situations, we may include funding for continence supports for children younger than 5 for medical conditions related to their disability. For example:

- if we have evidence your child will always need help to manage their continence due to their disability-related medical condition
- if their continence support needs are more costly due to their disability-related medical condition
- if they have higher care needs than other children of the same age, like using disposable urinary catheters.

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

Learn more about continence supports in our Would we fund it guides for [continence consumables](#) and [early childhood continence consumables](#).

How do you get continence supports in your plan?

When we think about what continence supports to include in your plan, we'll look at what other supports you get through the health system and other [mainstream and community supports](#). Your my NDIS contact, support coordinator or recovery coach will work with you and other services to help you get the support you need.

Once we've identified the supports and decided they meet the [NDIS funding criteria](#), we'll include the description and funding for the NDIS support in your plan.

Learn more about [how we include the reasonable and necessary supports in your plan](#).

If your situation changes or you think your current plan doesn't have enough funding for the continence supports you need, you can ask for a change to your plan.⁶

Learn more about [changing 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 shows what 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 you need to give us before we create or change your plan](#).

We'll ask you, your parent, or carers to tell us how your disability affects your ability to manage your incontinence. 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 you would like someone else to provide these supports instead.

We'll check you've had a continence assessment with a continence nurse or other suitably qualified health professional. We'll also 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.

Your health professional can use our [Continenence Related Assistive Technology Assessment Template](#) or write their own report.

We'll think about your lived experience and any assessments and reports to decide if your continence supports meet the [NDIS funding criteria](#).

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 NDIS supports you need. Your plan will describe how you can use your funding to get continence supports. Remember, you can only use your funds on NDIS supports, in-line with your plan.⁷ We will also talk to you at your plan meeting.

If you need help to use your funding, talk to your my NDIS contact, support coordinator, or recovery coach.

Learn more about using the NDIS supports in your plan in [Our Guideline – Your plan](#).

For more information, you can also look at [What happens once you have disability-related health supports in your plan?](#)

What if you don't agree with our decision?

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

We'll give you written reasons why we made the decision.⁸ 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.⁹

You'll need to ask for an internal review within 3 months of getting your plan.¹⁰

Learn more about [reviewing our decisions](#).

Reference list

¹ NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules r 7.4.

² NDIS Act s 34(1)(f).

³ NDIS Act s 10.

⁴ NDIS (Getting the NDIS Back on Track No. 1)(NDIS Supports) Transitional Rules 2024.

⁵ NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules r 3.4(a)(ii).

⁶ NDIS Act ss 47A, 48.

⁷ NDIS Act s 46.

⁸ NDIS Act s 100(1).

⁹ NDIS Act s 100.

¹⁰ NDIS Act s 100(2).