

## Culturally appropriate treatment and management of incontinence

Incontinence is a sensitive and personal issue that affects individuals from all backgrounds. For people from diverse cultural, linguistic and faith backgrounds, providing culturally appropriate incontinence support is essential to promote dignity, respect, and optimal, adequate care. By acknowledging the unique challenges faced by multicultural communities and developing targeted support programs, services in Australia, such as aged care organisations, can work towards improving incontinence care and promoting greater health equity.

This practice guide aims to provide health professionals working in aged care with practical tips and strategies to deliver culturally sensitive incontinence care.

Previously, the Victorian Continence Resource Centre (VCRC) undertook a project to explore the awareness of people from different multicultural communities in relation to the prevention, treatment and management of incontinence. Key findings from this research revealed some common themes. These included:

- Incontinence not seen as an illness and not serious enough to seek professional help
- Incontinence is seen as a social or hygiene problem
- Individuals often self-blame.<sup>1</sup>

Other research on incontinence support for multicultural communities in Australia highlights the importance of culturally sensitive approaches. The Continence Foundation of Australia conducted a "needs analysis" to understand how to improve multilingual resources and better support individuals from diverse communities. The key findings of this research included:

- Language Barriers, emphasizing the need for language-specific resources
- Cultural Sensitivities: Incontinence is often stigmatized in multicultural communities, leading to delayed seeking of medical help
- Community Engagement: Partnering with community organizations and cultural leaders is crucial for developing effective incontinence support programs <sup>2</sup>.

Further research in this field has found that in some multicultural communities' knowledge of incontinence was low and incontinence was thought to be an inevitable consequence of ageing. There was little understanding of treatments or assistance available under government-funded programs. No multicultural group who participated in the research was aware of the national continence program or phone helpline. Sensitivities of the topic in addition to language barriers in culturally and linguistically diverse communities may impose barriers to accessing help. Several groups thought they would cope with incontinence by themselves, while all groups suggested they would be able to discuss the condition with a doctor.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [Awareness of incontinence in ethnic communities - Monash University](#)

<sup>2</sup> [How we're reaching multicultural communities to talk about incontinence | Continence Health Australia \(formerly the Continence Foundation of Australia\)](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Addressing information needs of vulnerable communities about incontinence: a survey of ten CALD communities - PubMed](#)

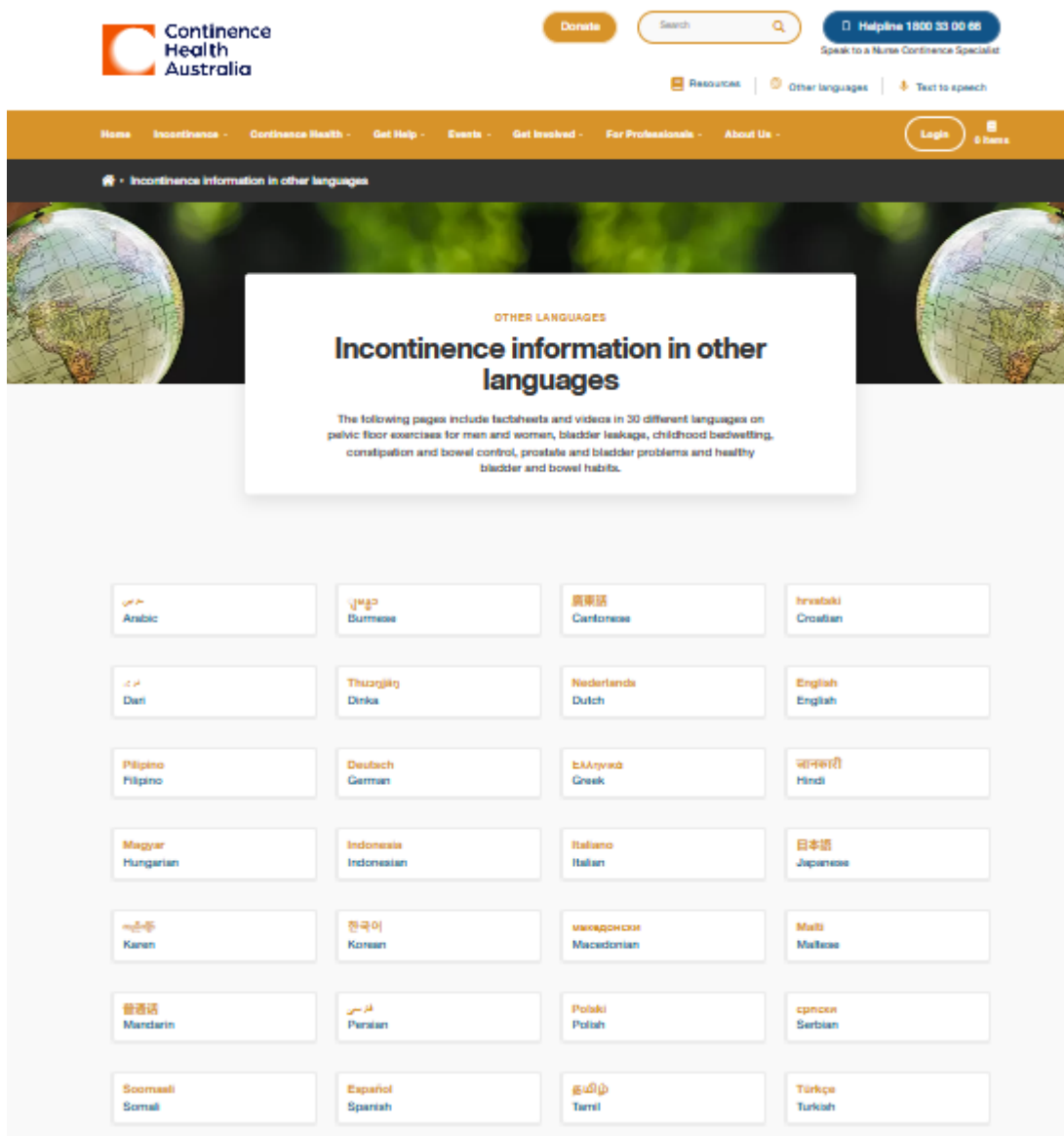
## Key Considerations

- Build a rapport with multicultural communities, families, and carers to establish relationships of trust when it comes to informing them about incontinence.
- Aged care workers need to be aware of the needs and communication preferences of culturally diverse consumers regarding incontinence information and incontinence service delivery.
- Aged care workers need to be aware of shame and stigma in relation to incontinence.
- Inform and raise awareness about incontinence in community languages to multicultural community members, carers, and families.
- Utilise existing resources to inform about and deliver culturally appropriate incontinence (example of in-language resources provided by [Continence Foundation of Australia](#))
- Identify cultural preferences related to personal care, hygiene, and incontinence management.
- Use visual aids and demonstrations: Use visual aids and demonstrations to explain incontinence management strategies.
- Respect residents' modesty and privacy, especially during intimate care procedures.
- Be aware of cultural differences in personal hygiene practices, such as bathing or toileting habits.
- Consider cultural dietary restrictions or preferences when providing nutrition advice.
- Respect residents' spiritual or religious beliefs, especially during times of stress or anxiety.
- Culturally appropriate care practices.
- Collaborate with multicultural community leaders and organisations to support the facilitation of incontinence education and resource development.
- Cultural awareness is crucial in providing person-centred care. Be aware of your own biases and cultural assumptions.
- Use interpreters or translation services when necessary.
- Offer educational materials in patients' preferred languages and formats.

## Good Practice Story

### Continence Foundation of Australia

The Continence Foundation of Australia has factsheets and videos in 30 different languages on pelvic floor exercises for men and women, bladder leakage, childhood bedwetting, constipation and bowel control, prostate and bladder problems and healthy bladder and bowel habits as well as guidelines for interpreters.



<sup>4</sup> <https://www.continence.org.au/incontinence-information-other-languages>

# Practice guide

## Useful Resources and Further Reading

<https://research.monash.edu/en/publications/awareness-of-incontinence-in-ethnic-communities>

<https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/0fc2a011-d290-42ef-a610-85073ef2909e/15387.pdf.aspx?inline=true>

<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/257133074> Addressing information needs of vulnerable communities about incontinence A survey of ten CALD communities

<https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/0fc2a011-d290-42ef-a610-85073ef2909e/15387.pdf.aspx?inline=true>

<https://eccv.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/ECCV-Golden-Years-Issue-112.pdf>

<https://www.culturaldiversity.com.au/documents/intranet-resources/cpp-state-territory-specific/cpp-vic/cpp-picac-forums/26th-november-2010/475-overview-of-continenence-in-ethnic-communities/file>

<https://www.australianageingagenda.com.au/noticeboard/resources/tackling-a-taboo-speaking-up-about-incontinence/>

<https://www.continence.org.au/news/how-were-reaching-multicultural-communities-talk-about-incontinence>

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