**Bladder Incontinence**

The issue of incontinence is a very major and prevalent problem in long term care facilities. It is estimated that half of all nursing home admissions are related to incontinence, and that 3 to 7% of all nursing home costs are based on the management of incontinence in the way of laundry and clothing replacement, cleaning rugs and upholstery, and purchasing disposable hygienic products.

Bladder programs have been approached from all different angles and the failure rate for such programs is tremendous. It has always been a difficult program to initiate and a much more difficult program to run efficiently in the nursing home environment. It needs to be remembered that it is an incorrect assumption that incontinence among the nursing home population is normal and should be expected. **Remember: Incontinence is NOT a normal part of aging.**

In order for the bladder to function properly, it is important that a holistic approach be utilized. In this approach it is important to remember that for the body to properly function, there is the need for adequate hydration, adequate muscle tone and physical activity. Incontinence is not an isolated problem and for the nursing home resident, it can lead to a multitude of related problems. The associated problems can range from skin rashes, pressure ulcers, complications with decubitus ulcers and infections related to having an indwelling catheter. Many residents might begin to suffer from feelings of isolation or embarrassment related to incontinence and physical problems could also arise. These could range from a resident stepping in or slipping in urine or hurrying to get to the bathroom which could result in a fall. It is not uncommon for residents to become somewhat obsessed with their bowel and bladder movements and this can become the main focus of their day to the point of interfering with a daily routine. To a resident, incontinence can represent a major loss of control over their body and life, which can result in both negative and devastating consequences.

In developing a continence program for restorative nursing, 2 levels of programs will be used to better serve our residents. Based on the results of an assessment period, resident history, and evaluation, a resident specific program will be developed and it will be based on either a bladder retraining or toileting program.