

HELPFUL HINTS TO HELP WITH LIVING AND CARING

My father had Parkinsons and was being fed with a G-tube when he was no longer capable of swallowing without choking since he couldn't direct anything he swallowed down the right tube and his esophagus muscles failed to work to push the food down. This was exacerbated by the extra salivation caused by his taking el dopa. Salivation required him to spit out the saliva or choke which was not pleasant to see.

When he had the G-tube inserted, we were concerned about his coming to the dining table due to the food smells, increasing salivation as well. However, if your table is like ours, the meal table is the social center, so we didn't want to deprive him of the social situation, including when we had guests over, as infrequent as that was due to the spitting. Therefore, we came up with a solution to the problem for a while. Go to the dentist and ask him/her for a bag of cotton "cylinders" used by dentists when filling your teeth to keep the area dry. The cotton absorbs the saliva when you put it in the mouth between the lower gums and cheek (a saliva point). Do it at the beginning of the meal and it will absorb a lot of saliva, reducing and sometime eliminating the coughing. It also is easy to remove and insert, even at the table, without grossing someone.

Word of caution, do not let the patient chew on the cotton. You have to be careful that they won't swallow the cotton

DEALING WITH INCONTENANCE "INEXPENSIVELY"

For women, other than always using the restroom prior to going somewhere, using a maximum absorbent sanitary napkin, especially on long trips can relieve the anxiety associated with not being able to get to the bathroom in time. It can also be used at night along with an adult diaper to insure that the bedding isn't soiled.

For men who urinate heavily at night, a VA nurse showed us a trick which saved time and money and sleep time. It proved to be better than using the condom catheters which get to be quite uncomfortable and don't always fit, causing major late night cleanup.

The trick is to use baby diapers which you buy in large box sizes at Costco etc.. What one has to do is to put a slit in the back of the baby diaper, then "thread" the penis through from back to the inside of the baby diaper, point the penis down to make sure the majority of the urine goes into the diaper, then close the diaper as normal with the tabs with the penis enclosed. We used to use an adult diaper on top to capture any bowel movement. At night, you can undo the adult diaper, easily pull off the baby diaper (it's usually heavy and pulls right off of the penis), wipe with a baby wipe and put a new baby diaper on with minimal effort.

We found that it was best to prepare an entire box of baby diapers at once. We'd have the caretaker and all of us, armed with a scissors, fold and cut the slit in the back of the baby diapers, then stack them, ready for use. We also found that some diapers had a lot of glue near the newly made hole which made it scratchy or hard, so we pulled out some of the stiff cotton and threw it out.

It may take a couple of diapers to see where and how large the slit in the back of the baby diaper should be. Hopefully these hints will be of help to you.