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## Nurses help with embarrassing problem

People in South Tyneside who have bladder and bowel problems are being reminded of the help available to them through a local specialist nursing service.

The nurses, who are employed by South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust, hold regular adult and children's clinics in South Tyneside, Gateshead and Sunderland and their expertise can often significantly improve continence problems. Their clinics are open access, which means appointments can be made direct without needing to go through a GP or other health professional. However, they say embarrassment leads to many people needlessly struggling alone.

One of the Trust's specialist nurses, Julie Fawcett, who has just had an article published in the British Journal of Community Nursing on the effective management of male urinary incontinence, said: "Incontinence can have an impact on all aspects of life but it is still a taboo subject for many people so they do not seek help and, instead, try to manage the problem alone.

"The good news is that it is a largely preventable and treatable condition. Treatment, which can range from lifestyle changes and exercises to medical devices and medication, depends on severity and the underlying cause but, even if the cause cannot be cured, there are ways to ease symptoms to make life more pleasant. Effective assessment is key to effective management and that is what our service offers. We can help to put people back in control of their bladder or bowel."

To contact South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust's bladder and bowel service, call 0191 2834754.

### When should you think about referral to the bladder and bowel service?

- When the problem is causing you worry or is affecting your daily life, for example, always looking for a toilet when out and about
- If you have symptoms such as going to the toilet frequently and/ or urgently, getting up a number of times during the night or having problems in emptying your bladder
- If you have involuntary leakage of urine or faeces

### Fact and figures

- It is estimated that between 3 and 6 million people in the UK have some degree of urinary incontinence
- Major faecal incontinence affects 1.4% of the population over 40 years old
- Constipation affects between 3% and 15%

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