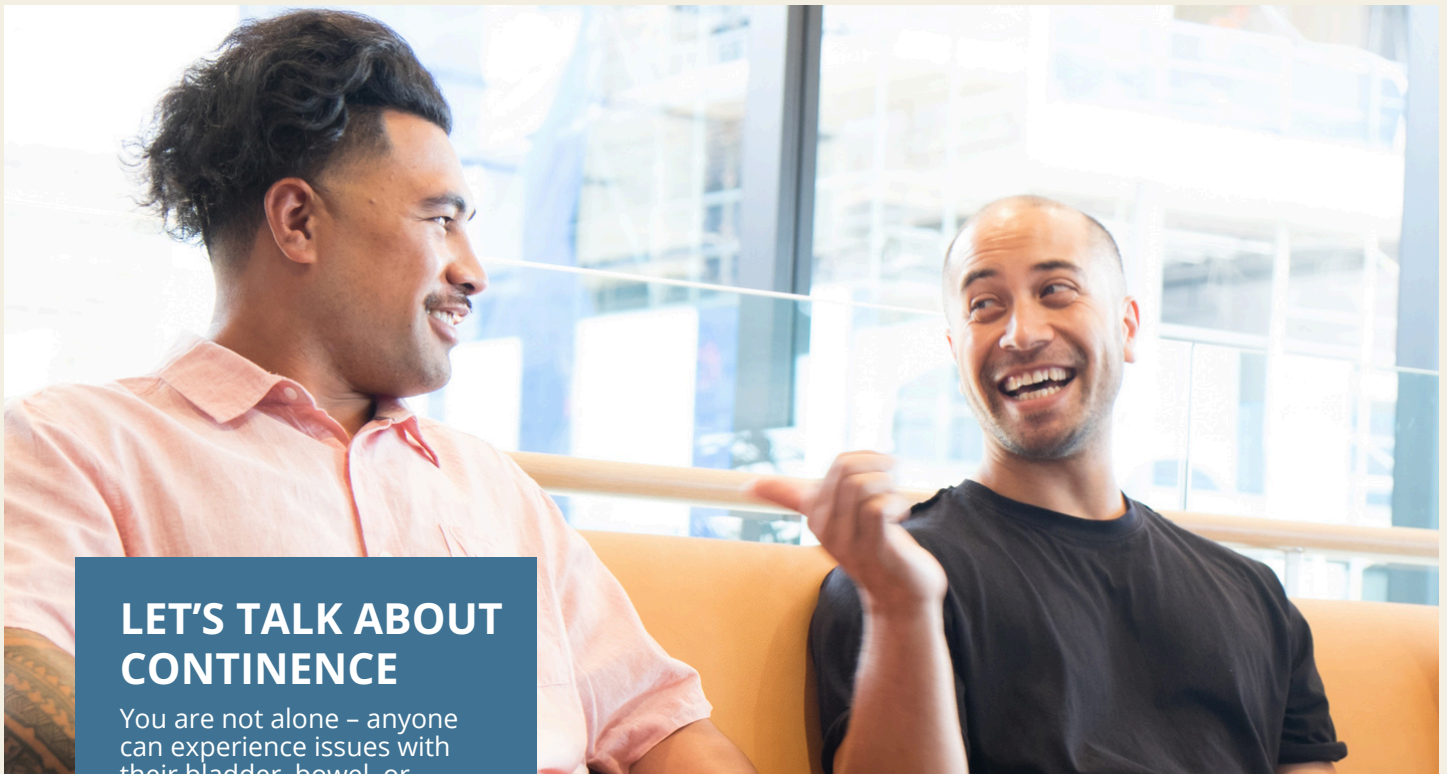


# YOU ARE NOT ALONE:

## PERSONAL STORIES & HOW TO GET HELP



### LET'S TALK ABOUT CONTINENCE

You are not alone – anyone can experience issues with their bladder, bowel, or both, including children, older people, and anyone in between. Let's throw taboo and judgement aside and talk about continence.

 *Please share this with anyone who may benefit!*

FEATURING THE HONEST STORIES OF PEOPLE WHO HAVE LIVED WITH AND LEARNED TO MANAGE THEIR INCONTINENCE

ALSO INSIDE: DOWNLOADABLE RESOURCES, HELPFUL INFORMATION, AND USEFUL LINKS TO REMIND YOU THAT YOU ARE NOT ALONE AND THAT HELP IS AVAILABLE.



PERSONAL STORIES



CONTINENCE CARE PATHWAYS



BLADDER, BOWEL, & PELVIC HEALTH RESOURCES

# CONTENTS

Click on the topics below to go straight to the most helpful pages for you.



TRANSLATED GUIDES



PERSONAL STORIES



CONTINENCE CARE  
PATHWAYS



LET'S TALK:  
BLADDERS



LET'S TALK:  
BOWELS



LET'S TALK:  
PELVIC FLOOR



WHEN TO SEEK HELP

# PERSONAL STORIES

In a special video message, much-loved Kiwi personality Jason Gunn opens up about his decades-long experience with bowel issues. Jason reminds us that it's okay to talk about continence – and that in fact, we *need* to.



WATCH  
JASON GUNN'S  
SPECIAL VIDEO  
MESSAGE

Jason reflects on his experience having bowel issues, which date back to his days on *The Son of a Gunn Show*. When it comes to continence, Jason says, "I know a lot of us don't feel comfortable talking about that sort of stuff – but there lies the problem: A lot of us NEED to get more comfortable talking about that sort of stuff."

Jason reminds us that "it's okay to talk about it...And there's people to talk about it with...It's okay to share your story with other people."

Jason's  
Story:  
"It's okay  
to talk  
about it"



# PERSONAL STORIES

Emma, an Auckland mum and grandmother who spent more than two decades trying to live with incontinence, encourages others to get the help they need and stop missing out on life.



WATCH EMMA'S  
FULL STORY

## Emma's Story: “Don't miss out on life”

“You deserve to live a full life doing the things that you enjoy. And if a bladder issue is stopping you, then get it sorted. And keep on pushing until it is sorted,” Emma says.

“But don't wait twenty something years. Don't miss out on life. Or miss out on the things you enjoy in life because there is this issue. Don't be embarrassed. Don't let the shame of the issue get the better of you. And don't let it play with your head. It's not worth it.”

# PERSONAL STORIES

Three New Zealanders share their honest journeys with incontinence and discuss the value of talking about their issues with someone.



**ROB SUDDENLY BEGAN EXPERIENCING BLADDER INCONTINENCE, AND CONTINUES TO LEARN WHAT WORKS BEST FOR HIM AND HIS INDIVIDUAL SITUATION.**

*"[Incontinence is] such a hard topic to talk about, but I knew I had to speak up and tell my doctor what was happening...I felt better after seeking help rather than suffering in silence." In addition to seeking professional help, Rob added, "Talking to people was my best platform for dealing with [my incontinence]...it was the best thing I could have done because of the support my friends and family gave me."*



**WATCH ROB'S  
FULL STORY**

**CLAIRE HAD BEEN LIVING WITH INCONTINENCE FOR OVER 40 YEARS BEFORE DECIDING TO TAKE CONTROL OF HER LIFE BACK BY SEEKING HELP.**

*"My bowel and urinary incontinence were impacting my daily life – I felt low confidence, embarrassment, fear, and frustration at having very little control," Claire admits. "After a lifetime of 'accidents', it took specialist support and my own commitment to regain my freedom, confidence, and dignity...It still surprises me that with the minimum amount of energy doing my daily 'invisible exercises', decades of this messy issue was resolved within months."*



**WATCH CLAIRE'S  
FULL STORY**



**KEN EXPERIENCED URINARY INCONTINENCE FOR YEARS FOLLOWING HIS PROSTATE SURGERY AND IS NOW ALMOST FULLY CONTINENT.**

*"For me, getting to this stage has been quite a journey. Given time and the expertise of dedicated professionals like Dr. Lawrence I am sure that all men with urinary incontinence following post-prostate conditions can be effectively treated," Ken reflects. "For those thinking of the embarrassment factor, I can only say that that is a tiny price to pay for excellent treatment and a life free of incontinence."*



**WATCH KEN'S  
FULL STORY**

# CARE PATHWAYS

Our continence care pathway documents guide you to recognise symptoms, learn self-management techniques, find out treatment options, and where to go for professional support in New Zealand.



**WOMEN**

**MEN**

**CHILDREN**

**OLDER  
PEOPLE**

**DISABLED  
PEOPLE**

# LET'S TALK: BLADDERS

Our Bladder Guide gives you an overview of what a healthy and unhealthy bladder might look like, so that you can decide if you need further advice.

## How do I know what's normal?

Have a look at our quick reference charts below

### *A healthy bladder*

- ✓ Doesn't leak, tells you when it's full, and gives you time to get to a toilet
- ✓ Can hold up to 400–600 ml of urine
- ✓ Empties 4–8 times a day
- ✓ May wake you up once a night to go the toilet (or twice if you are older)
- ✓ Completely empties each time

### *An unhealthy bladder*

- ✗ Leaks urine with coughing/sneezing/lifting
- ✗ Empties more than 8 times per day
- ✗ Voids frequently, passing small amounts
- ✗ Wakes you up more than twice a night
- ✗ Does not feel completely empty after passing urine
- ✗ Burns or stings when passing urine
- ✗ The urge is so strong you can't get to the toilet in time

If you think you might have an unhealthy bladder, don't panic! Call us on 0800 650 659 for some friendly advice, or go to [continence.org.nz](http://continence.org.nz) for more information. Many issues can be easily resolved, with the right support.

0800 650 659 [continence.org.nz](http://continence.org.nz)

↓ DOWNLOAD

continence **NZ**

## FIND OUT MORE



Visit the Bladder and Bowel Health section of our website to learn more!

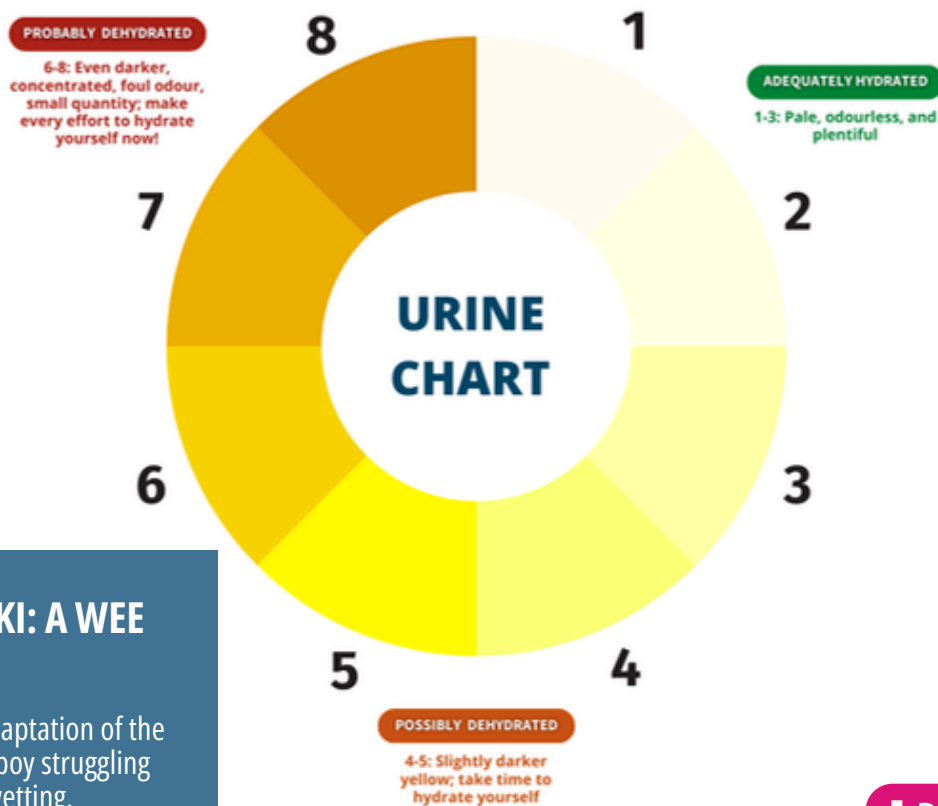


# LET'S TALK: BLADDERS

Our Urine Chart categorises urine into three types, allowing you to assess your bladder health based on the colour of your urine.

## What's Your Number?

See if your bladder is healthy by checking the Urine Chart.  
You should be aiming for #1, 2, or 3.



### FOR TAMARIKI: A WEE SECRET



A video adaptation of the story of a boy struggling with bedwetting.

↓ DOWNLOAD

The darker your urine is the more likely it is that you are not drinking enough fluids to maintain health.

If you are not seeing #1-3 when you flush, give us a call and we can talk about your bladder health.

**continence** **NZ**  
**0800 650 659**



# LET'S TALK: BOWELS

Our Bowel Guide gives you an overview of what a healthy and unhealthy bowel might look like, so that you can decide if you need further advice.

## How do I know what's normal?

Have a look at our quick reference charts below

### Healthy bowel

- ✓ Daily soft brown stool, a number four on the Bristol stool chart
- ✓ Smooth and shaped like a log
- ✓ No straining required
- ✓ No pain on passing a stool
- ✓ No bleeding
- ✓ No leakage or incontinence of stools

### Bristol Stool Chart

-  Type 1: Separate hard lumps, like pellets (hard to pass)
-  Type 2: Log shaped but lumpy
- ✓  **Type 3 is Healthy: Like a log but with cracks on the surface**
- ✓  **Type 4 is Healthy: Like a log or snake, smooth and soft**
-  Type 5: Soft blobs with clear-cut edges
-  Type 6: Fluffy pieces with ragged edges, a mushy stool
-  Type 7: Watery, no solid pieces. Entirely liquid

### Unhealthy bowel

- ✗ Passing a stool 3 times a week or less
- ✗ Hard stools that are difficult to pass
- ✗ Having to strain to pass a stool
- ✗ Feeling of incomplete emptying of the bowel
- ✗ Passing blood from the bowel
- ✗ Pain on passing a stool
- ✗ No control over passing a stool - incontinence
- ✗ Very loose or watery stools
- ✗ Change from your usual bowel habit

0800 650 659 [continence.org.nz](http://continence.org.nz)

continence 

## FOR TAMARIKI: MEET MR POO!



A helpful video that explains in simple terms how to spot a healthy bowel.

↓ DOWNLOAD

# LET'S TALK: BOWELS

The Bristol Stool Chart categorises stool into seven types, allowing you to assess your bowel health based on your stool type.

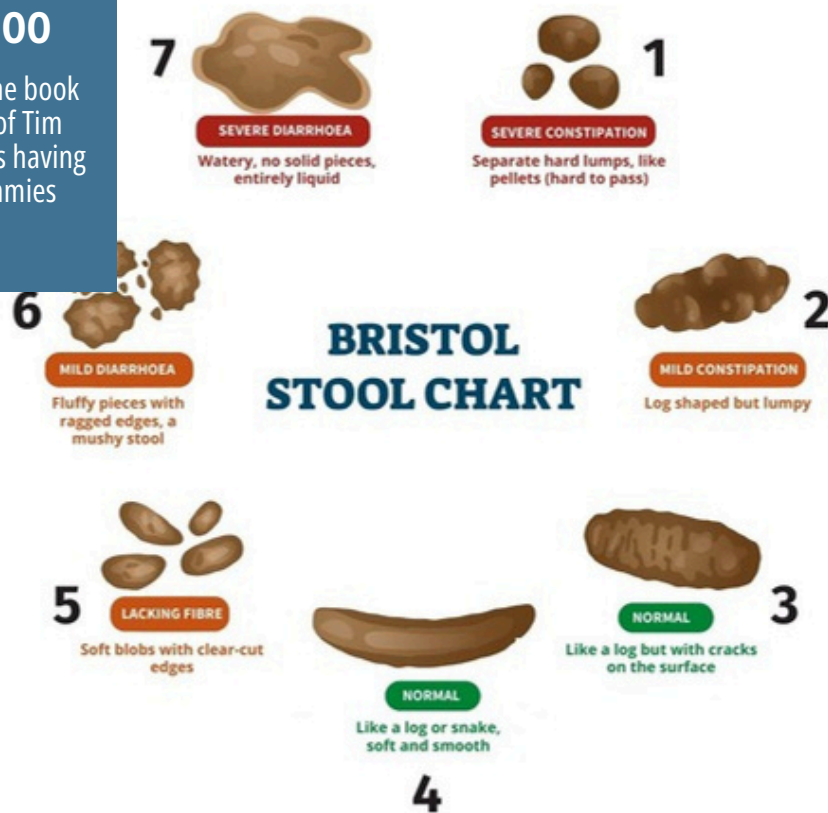
## FOR TAMARIKI: POO HOO



A video adaptation of the book Poo Hoo tells the story of Tim Thompson, a boy who is having problems with sore tummies and sneaky poos.

### What's Your Number?

See if your bowel is healthy by checking the Bristol Stool Chart. You should be aiming for #3 or #4.



If you are not seeing #3 or #4 when you flush, give us a call and we can talk about your bowel health.

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0800 650 659

↓ DOWNLOAD

# LET'S TALK: PELVIC FLOOR

## Pelvic Floor Guide

WITH LIZ CHILDS, PELVIC HEALTH PHYSIO



Everyone should be aware of their pelvic floor. It's never too late to learn!  
Here is Liz's simple guide:

### SIT UP STRAIGHT AND RELAX

*Relax your tummy and inner thighs*

When done correctly, a pelvic floor contraction feels like you are squeezing and lifting up inside. For women, you could imagine you are squeezing around a tampon and pulling it in. For men, visualising "nuts to guts" might help activate the right muscles.

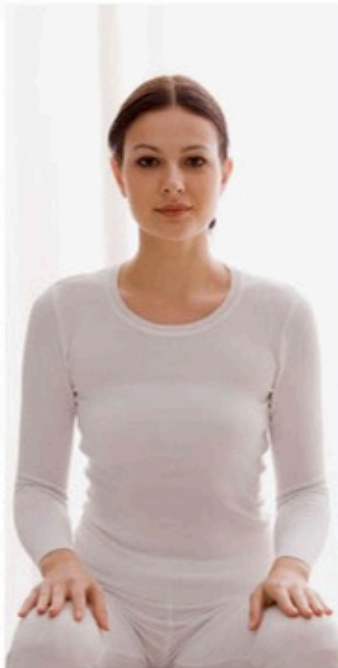
### LET GO FULLY AFTERWARDS

Ideally, you should be able to hold a contraction for 10 seconds – and feel it relax completely afterwards. If you can only hold it for one or two seconds, that's fine, start there and build it up.

### STILL UNSURE?

If you're not sure you can contract correctly and relax fully, seek help from somebody who has specialised training in pelvic floor exercises (eg a pelvic health physio).

Never be afraid to ask for help!



### BE CAREFUL TO ISOLATE THE CORRECT MUSCLES

*Squeeze, don't suck in*

When you do a pelvic floor contraction you should also feel a drawing in of your lower tummy muscles. Be careful not to suck up under your ribs, or into your chest, and don't squeeze your buttocks.

### DO THEM DAILY

- Squeeze and lift
- Build up to a 10 second hold
- Rest for 10 seconds
- Repeat 10 times
- Do this three times a day

Once your muscles are strong, keep doing the exercises once a day to maintain them for the rest of your life. You can do them anywhere, anytime - just make sure you do them!



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# LET'S TALK: PELVIC FLOOR

Our Pelvic Floor Muscle Exercises digital sticker provides a quick-reference outline of how you can do pelvic floor exercises to support your bladder and bowel.

## Pelvic Floor Muscle Exercises

Pelvic floor muscles help with support of the pelvic organs, control of the bladder and bowel, and core stability.

### How to perform pelvic floor muscle exercises:

- Start in a sitting or lying position
- Squeeze and lift as if you were trying to stop the flow of urine or stop yourself passing wind (you should be able to feel a let go/relax afterwards)
- Try and hold for 2-3 seconds
- Repeat up to 10 times, build up to 10x10 second holds
- Do this several times a day, in different positions

**Remember** - Bladder leakage is common, but not something that will be resolved without the right help. If you need support, contact your local pelvic health physio or continence professional. Some people also experience bowel leakage - seeking professional help is vital.

↓ DOWNLOAD



0800 650 659



continence.org.nz

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## FIND OUT MORE



Visit the Pelvic Floor section of our website to learn more about these hard-working but often overlooked muscles!



# SELF-HELP TIPS

Our Top Tips are a good place to start for maintaining or improving your bladder and bowel health.

continence **NZ**

## Top tips for bladder and bowel health

- 1 Drink 1.5–2 litres of fluid per day
- 2 Drink mostly water
- 3 Keep caffeine intake to a minimum
- 4 Do pelvic floor exercises every day for life
- 5 Don't strain to have a bowel motion
- 6 Keep bowel motions soft with enough dietary fibre. You can try supplements like psyllium husk or Metamucil.
- 7 Sit properly on the toilet to relax the pelvic floor
- 8 Do not hover over the toilet, use toilet paper to sit on
- 9 Any leakage is abnormal – see your GP and ask for a referral to a Continence Specialist
- 10 Any bleeding from the bowel or bladder is abnormal – see your GP

### FIND OUT MORE



Visit the Bladder and Bowel Health section of our website to learn more!

↓ **DOWNLOAD**

0800 650 659

continence.org.nz

# WHEN TO SEEK HELP


Our checklist can help you decide if you may have a problem with your bladder or bowel, and if you should consider seeking help.

## Concerned about your bladder or bowel health? Not sure if you have a problem?

- Do you ever leak when you laugh, cough, or sneeze? Or when you exercise or play sport?
- Plan ahead so you are always near a toilet when you leave the house?
- Do you ever have to run to the bathroom?
- Worry you might not make it in time?
- Ever leak before you get there?
- Do you wake up to go to the toilet twice or more at night?
- Does your bladder sometimes feel like it isn't empty, even when you've just been to the toilet?
- Do you strain to empty your bowel?
- Ever soil your underwear?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, you may have a bladder or bowel issue. Call us and we can help!

 0800 650 659

 [continence.org.nz](http://continence.org.nz)

continence 

## WHO CAN HELP?



View our list of Continence Providers and find out more about some of the people and organisations who work in continence care

 **DOWNLOAD**

# TRANSLATED GUIDES

Our most popular continence resources, including our bladder and bowel guides, are available to download in six languages.



ENGLISH

TE REO MĀORI

MANDARIN  
CHINESE

HINDI

TONGAN

SAMOAN

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