From Dr. Escudé...

Evaluating Incontinence in People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD)

In people who communicate in ways other than with words, behaviors are often used to communicate information to others. It is important to rule out underlying MEDICAL causes for adverse behaviors before initiating medications, restraints or other behavior modification initiatives.

Urinary incontinence may be from a learned behavior, but it is necessary to rule out medical causes before initiating a behavioral medication or other management strategy.

Considerations for causes of urinary incontinence include:
- Urinary tract infections
- Constipation
- Changes with age
- Menopause
- Hysterectomy
- Enlarged prostate
- Prostate cancer or its treatment
- Obstruction
- Pregnancy
- Childbirth
- Neurological disorders

Signs and symptoms of a urinary tract infection may look different in people with IDD. You may see behaviors like:
- New onset urinary incontinence
- Agitation
- Not able to sit still (up and down)
- Repetitive trips to toilet
- Screaming when approaching toilet or with incontinence
- Grabbing genitals or rubbing with objects
- Hands in pants, physical or verbal aggression with no antecedent
- Abdominal guarding, rocking
- Change in cognitive status
- Fatigue
Thanks for your careful attention to helping improve the lives of people we support.

Craig Escudé, MD, FAAFP
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Dr. Escudé has dedicated his career to providing healthcare for people with IDD and other vulnerable populations and teaches on the subject throughout the country.