



World Continence Week 2019

17-23 June

Press Pack



Introduction

World Continence Week takes place every June to raise awareness of bladder weakness, pelvic pain and other debilitating conditions which impact greatly on the lives of patients and carers. It is organised by the World Federation of Incontinence Patients (WFIP)

The Urology Foundation is the UK and Ireland's only urology-specific charity. By raising awareness, funding ground-breaking research, and providing training we work to end the suffering caused by urology disease.

We support World Continence Week because we know the devastating impact that continence issues have on millions of people in Britain.

For 2019, we are centring our focus on two key areas:

1. Overactive bladder
2. The increasing closures of public toilets

Overactive bladder: its prevalence and why we are focussing on it this year

Overactive bladder affects around 1 in 8 people in Britain. That's more people than asthma and more people than diabetes. However, overactive bladder is almost never spoken about. That is what we want to change during World Continence Week 2019

People with a healthy bladder are able to hold their pee for as long as necessary. However, people with overactive bladder cannot hold their bladder. They can find themselves rushing to the toilet at very short notice.

For people with overactive bladder, life can become very difficult, as anything from an uninterrupted night's sleep to long meetings, cinema trips to country walks, become fraught. The fear of having an accident can leave people with overactive bladder housebound.

We are focussing our attention on overactive bladder this year to raise awareness of this underrepresented disease and because this year marks 15 years of Botox treatment for the disease

Botox: the unlikely treatment for a horrible disease

Fifteen years ago, The Urology Foundation provided funding for Mr Arun Sahai, who built upon research being conducted in Switzerland.

In the early 2000s Swiss scientists were looking at the possibility of using Botox, one of the world's most deadly toxins, as a way of treating overactive bladder in patients with neurological conditions and spinal cord injuries.



Using funding from The Urology Foundation, Arun was able to prove that Botox is also an effective treatment for overactive bladder in the general public, as well. Ever since then, Botox has been used as an effective treatment for millions of people across the world.

For World Continence Week 2019, The Urology Foundation has a simple message: if you are struggling to control your bladder, you're not alone and treatments are readily available. There's no need to suffer in silence.

Ending the closure of Britain's public toilets

In the last 5 years Britain's public toilet budgets have fallen by £26 million. This has seen the number of public toilets in the country drop by 13%, with rural areas particularly suffering from these cuts.

These cuts have come at a particularly bad time for Britons. With an ageing population and more people undergoing surgery for prostate cancer and bladder cancer, the numbers of people who need access to public toilets is growing. When you include women who have experienced childbirth, men with an enlarged prostate (half of men over 50) and people with overactive bladder, you get a picture of the millions of people who rely on public toilets.

The Urology Foundation is supporting an Early Day Motion, proposed by Rosie Cooper MP and the All Party Parliamentary Group on Continence. We hope that this Early Day Motion will raise the profile of what is a serious issue and will encourage local government to reverse the cuts that have led to this dramatic drop in public toilets.

We are calling on members of the public to write to or Tweet their MP to encourage them to support this Early Day Motion.

Spokespeople

If you would like to speak to a spokesperson about these issues, we have a number of people available.

Louise de Winter, CEO of The Urology Foundation

Louise has been CEO of The Urology Foundation since April 2011 and is well placed to talk about all aspects of the World Continence Week campaign

Mr Arun Sahai, Consultant Urological Surgeon

Arun is a urology consultant at Guy's hospital and an honorary senior lecturer within King's Health Partners. His research 15 years ago was part of the process that led to seeing Botox approved as a treatment for OAB. He has been treating patients for OAB ever since. Arun is well placed to talk about OAB from a clinical perspective.

Quotes for use by press

Louise de Winter, CEO of The Urology Foundation said about the campaign,



“My hope for this campaign is that we can start a conversation around overactive bladder. By making people aware of the scale of the problem, namely that it affects 1 in 8 of us, I hope that we can break down some of the stigma that’s preventing us from having this conversation.

“Once we have started that conversation, hopefully it will encourage more people to come forward for treatment and will persuade local government to reverse the dramatic cuts to public toilets.”

John Tiner, a prostate cancer patient and former TUF Chair of Trustees on incontinence and public toilets

“I’ve had a busy career working in the City and prostate cancer brought a new dimension to my working life. My treatment caused problems with my bladder and it was no time at all before I knew the location of every public toilet in the City of London. I didn’t want to take any chances with being caught short in between meetings.

“Closing public toilets is terrible for people like me. I became heavily dependent on those toilets. I would encourage local government to rethink their decision to close public toilets; my life would have become very, very difficult without them. No doubt that’s true of millions of others across the country.”

Key Stats

Overactive bladder

- 1 in 8 people in Britain have overactive bladder
- That equates to roughly 8 million people
- More people have overactive bladder than diabetes
- More people have overactive bladder than asthma
- More people have overactive bladder than osteoporosis

Public toilets

- In Cornwall the number of public toilets fell from 247 in 2011 to 14 in 2018
- The whole of Wiltshire now has only 22 public toilets
- The Isle of Wight has seen a public toilet reduction of 92%
- The number of public toilets in Swansea has halved
- Inverness has lost 26 of its public toilets
- In 37 areas, major councils no longer run public toilets
- Nationwide there has been a 13% drop between 2010 and 2018

For more information, please email sayara@theurologyfoundation.org or call 020 7713 9538

