

“I don’t want to go
anywhere new.”



BOG
STANDARD

Martin Wells, 70, is a former self employed professional, and lives in Burnley, Lancashire.

Martin was diagnosed with prostate cancer in 2007 and underwent surgery to remove his prostate.



Martin calls for better facilities for men with incontinence.

“I was diagnosed after I went to the GP to finally sort out a different unrelated issue, and that’s when the GP suggested I get some tests done.”

After a decade of managing the cancer well and keeping it under control, Martin discovered his cancer had reignited and had spread to his bones. He is now following a lifelong regime of medication and treatment, which has caused significant urinary incontinence.

“I was incontinent after my first round of treatment, and I felt very unprepared for it. I was told it would take a few weeks to get back to normal. When my catheter was removed, I genuinely thought the life I had was over. I was peeing myself all the time, and it did get better. Since the cancer returned, my incontinence is more pronounced, and I feel like it won’t ever improve.

“People say to me, ‘oh you look so well Martin’, but nobody knows what’s going on in my mind; how much more pronounced my incontinence is, how I grapple with some of my day-to-day tasks because of it, and how I feel.”

“I have ADHD, and it can mean that I find it challenging to plan for the unexpected and there’s quite a few unexpected leaks and searching for toilets when you’re incontinent. On the other hand, I’m lucky, because as someone with ADHD I’m open and very direct with talking about my incontinence, which I know helps other people in a way. Although a few might say I am too open,” he says with a grin.



“Sometimes being a man can get in the way of being a man with prostate cancer. My bravado can cover things up, **but living with incontinence can sometimes feel catastrophic.**”

“I’m often asked in the street ‘How’s the prostate cancer, Martin?’ and I respond with ‘Well, I’m incontinent, I can’t get an erection, I can’t ejaculate, and my libido is...’ and all of a sudden I’m waving goodbye to them as they scurry down the street in shock,” he laughs.

“Men will joke about these things, and give the impression everything is fine, and often as a result people can dismiss them, when there are serious issues to talk about.

“Sometimes being a man can get in the way of being a man with prostate cancer. My bravado can cover things up, but living with incontinence can sometimes feel catastrophic.

“One insight: you have to change your lifestyle.

“I used to go walking without any problems, but now I have to plan my route(s) carefully to make sure I’m back in a certain amount of time, or that I can stop in a shop or a pub or a hotel on the way to change my pad.

“My partner is very spontaneous, and he will suggest a trip or an activity and might want to go at short notice – but I can’t manage that as I used to anymore. I have to plan carefully where I’ll be going and what shops, cafes or hotels

are around, and will they have loos I can easily access? I think to myself - will they have a bin or not? Are they the kind of places I can enter unnoticed, or will I have to pretend to be a hotel guest who is lost looking for the bathroom? It’s a weight on my already very busy mind, and I can find it exhausting.

“I used to be far more relaxed. My partner and I used to love going down to London and visiting all the lovely different coffee shops and sights but now when he suggests going, I immediately think:

“I can’t go to the cafes, because I can’t drink too much tea or coffee.

“Because I’ll need to change my pad more often.

“And then I’ll have to find a loo more often.

“And find some way to get rid of my incontinence pads more often.

“What if there are no bins anywhere?

“I play this conversation in my mind over and over again.

“So, I say let’s not go.”



“I expect there to be toilet paper in the loo, **so why not a bin for my incontinence pads?**”

“I want to look forward to a great time on a weekend away. I don’t want to worry about where to change my incontinence products and what I do with them after I’ve changed them. I don’t want to drop urine-soaked pads in the general waste bin in the toilet or out in public view. I just want to be able to change my products in the cubicle.

“If there were bins everywhere it would make my life so much easier. It would make life so much more joyful, because I wouldn’t be missing moments like spontaneous trips or short city breaks with my partner. I’m unable to be in the moment, and I feel I don’t want to go anywhere new.

“Living like this means living with low-level anxiety every day and perpetually anticipating

stress. My brain is forever having a conversation with itself about when and where I need to change my pad and how I’ll dispose of the pad and who will have to clear it up.

“When rushing around searching for a bin or trying to change my products in public and there’s nothing there for me - I feel like I’m the only person in the world with this problem, but it’s happening to many more men than a lot of people realise.

“The frustrating thing is that it doesn’t have to be like this. If we have the right support and the right facilities around us – like sanitary bins in men’s loos.

“I expect there to be toilet paper in the loo, so why not a bin for my incontinence pads?”

For men living with the effects of prostate cancer treatment or incontinence, **the washroom should be a safe space.**

That’s why **phs** Group, in partnership with Prostate Cancer UK, have created the **BOG STANDARD Charter**, to encourage safe spaces for men and allow them to dispose of their incontinence waste with dignity – which will allow them to continue living their lives, free from embarrassment, shame or anxiety.

For more information, visit www.phs.co.uk/BOGSTANDARD

