

Continence Management & Skin Care

Only people living with incontinence can truly understand the pain and discomfort caused by Incontinence Associated Dermatitis (IAD). Incorporating appropriate skin care and continence product selection is essential to providing effective continence management.

Without proper assessment and treatment, incontinence predisposes those who are living with the condition to rashes, moisture lesions, skin and urinary tract infections, and untreated incontinence tends to become progressively worse (Dugan, et al. 2001).

“Incontinence can be improved, if not cured, in eight out of ten cases but fewer than half of adults with bladder control problems report their condition to their healthcare provider”(Dugan, et al. 2001).

Horrocks et, al (2004) reports, a commonly held belief that incontinence is a natural and inevitable consequence of aging, is a major factor that prevents some from seeking help for bladder control problems.

Those who live with incontinence and self manage their symptoms without professional support and guidance, are doing so at a social, psychological and, in some cases health cost (Horrocks, et al. 2004).

Effective Continence Management for those who live with incontinence in the community is dependent on several factors.

- Firstly seeking help and services to assess bladder control problems by health care provider.
- Appropriate product selection and recommendations to best meet continence needs and lifestyle.
- Appropriate skin care regime to ensure optimal skin integrity.

Why is it important to choose the right product?

Bladder control problems can diminish quality of life, but this can be minimized by choosing the right continence product.

Whether a continence product is required in the short term during a treatment program or in the long term as a management strategy, it is essential to select the right product to ensure social continence that provides confidence and security.

Those who live with moderate to severe urinary incontinence are traditionally reliant on disposable continence aids. Fader(2008) reported that the most important characteristic for both men and women in achieving social continence, is leakage protection.

When selecting continence products it's also important to ensure the products that you choose help to prevent skin problems such as Incontinence Associated Dermatitis, itching and reddening. Independent scientific evidence shows that incontinence and long-term continence pad use is associated with skin complications in 42% of people living with incontinence (Junkin, 2007).

How do you ensure that you select the right products?

Effective Continence Management

Ideally a consultation with a health provider such as a Continence Nurse Specialist, Urologist or Urogynecologist will provide valuable information about the volume and

frequency of leakage that will assist in determining a more comprehensive continence management program and the continence product requirements.

To help facilitate easier selection of appropriate continence products for both the health provider and the consumer, there is the new ABL (absorbency before leakage) test method for continence products developed by EDANA (European Disposables and Nonwovens Association) (Cottenden, 2011).

What this means is that the ABL test method uses real-life criteria such as:

- Simulation of human body shape
- Simulation of realistic body weight and pressure
- Realistic voiding volumes released at the voiding point
- Realistic absorption values which help the care giver to choose the continence product

These ABL values can help to increase confidence in your decision making when advising or choosing continence products for those who live with moderate to severe incontinence in the community.

Effective Skin Protection

Considering the science in the pad, an appropriate skin care regime is necessary to ensure optimal skin integrity for people who have to manage incontinence.

It is important to consider that continence products:

- Ensure rapid fluid absorption and safe storage of urine within the core of the pad to ensure that the skin remains dry and protects the stratum corneum from swelling.
- Contain a pH 5.5 buffer on the top layer of the product that will support the skin's antibacterial effect and natural protection mechanism.
- Have breathable side panels for air and sweat to circulate, which allows moisture to escape and stops the stratum corneum from swelling.

When choosing an appropriate skin care regime:

Ensure the products are skin balanced pH 5.5 to help preserve the acid protection mantle of the skin

For those who are living with incontinence, it is recommended that a program incorporates:

- o cleansing with each product change or episode of incontinence
- o protection product (barrier cream) such as cream or foam to promote good skin integrity
- o moisturizing product to moisturize skin and minimize inflammation

Effective continence management whilst maintaining optimal skin integrity for those who live with incontinence in the community can be achieved ideally with a combination of professional guidance from a health provider and appropriate product selection that supports the acid protection mantle of the skin.

Written by: **Anthea Reus**, Clinical Consultant Continence. Paul HARTMANN.

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