



The Canadian  
Continenence  
Foundation

# Continenence Facts

## Skin Care and Urinary Incontinence Problems, solutions and suggestions

**O**ur skin performs many functions – it protects us from infection, insulates our body from heat and cold, regulates our body temperature, produces vitamin D and provides sensation. Urine touching our skin can cause problems.

### WHY DOES URINARY INCONTINENCE CAUSE SKIN PROBLEMS?

There are many reasons why this happens:

- Too much wetness makes the skin less flexible. Our skin can then become irritated due to rubbing against incontinence pads, clothing or linen.
- Ammonia, produced from urine, allows bacteria to grow. Bacteria leads to damage and even infection.

### SIGNS OF SKIN PROBLEMS

The first signs of skin problems can be a pale pinkish to deep red appearance. The skin may burn or feel itchy and may be painful. Sometimes the skin will feel rough or appear cracked. It may even have blisters. Pressure ulcers, which are deep open wounds, may occur.

Yeast infections are also common. A yeast infection is a reddish, spotty rash and can be very itchy. Medicated creams or powders are available to treat these. You will need to have a prescription from your physician.



### SKIN CARE PRODUCTS

Healthy skin is the first line of defense against skin problems. A variety of products can help keep your skin healthy. There are three types of skin care products:

- Cleansers
- Barriers
- Moisturizers

#### Cleansers

Special skin cleansers are better than soap because they will not dry your skin like ordinary soaps. Cleansers may perform the following functions:

- Remove urine or stool
- Reduce burning and stinging

- Soothe
- Disinfect
- Eliminate odor
- Deodorize

Cleansers are available in foam, spray, lotion or wipes. (If using public washrooms, the wipes may be convenient to carry with you.) Cleansers can be Rinse or No-Rinse. No-Rinse cleansers do not have to be rinsed with water, and some may also provide an extra protective layer. Cleansers should be used during bathing. If there are signs of irritation, redness or odor, they should be used after every incontinence episode.

#### Barriers

Barriers or "sealants" protect your skin from urine. They perform the following functions:

- Provide a coating on the skin that urine does not penetrate.
- Help to reduce friction from linen, clothing or incontinence pads.

Barrier products are available in creams, sprays, powders or wipes. Barriers are very beneficial if you have fragile skin or have frequent incontinence. Use after cleansing if there is skin soreness or redness.

*Note:* If using a barrier powder, be careful of using too much as this can result in "lumping" or caking, especially in skin creases and folds.

#### Moisturizers

Frequent cleansing can result in dryness or cracking of your skin. This can lead to more serious damage. Moisturizers can help to prevent this.

They perform the following functions:

- Seal in and add moisture to the skin
- Protect the skin

Some moisturizers contain zinc, aloe vera, and Vitamins A, D, & E, which give further protection. Moisturizers are available in lotions or creams.

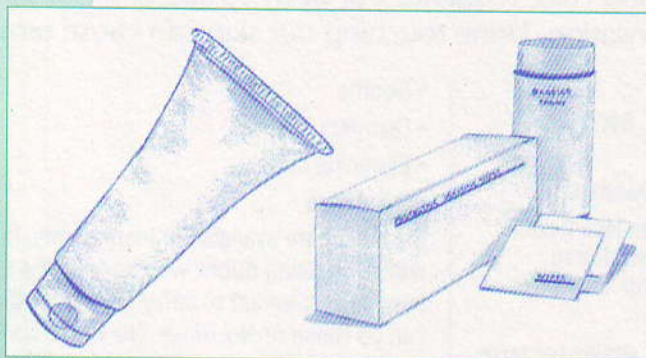


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Moisturizers are best applied after bathing to take advantage of open pores.

### Notes:

- If you use a barrier, do not apply a moisturizer.
- Excessive use of moisturizers can leave your skin too wet and may decrease the effectiveness of absorbant products.



### WHERE CAN I BUY SKIN CARE PRODUCTS?

- Pharmacy
- Home Health Care store
- Department/grocery store (limited supply)

In the store, you may find skin care products in any of the following places:

- Near incontinence products
- In the skin care section close to body lotions
- Near feminine hygiene products such as sanitary napkins

Wherever you go, be sure to inquire about trial samples as these are often available.

### PREVENTION OF SKIN PROBLEMS:

The first step in managing skin problems is to prevent them! To do this, basic skin care and the proper products are necessary.

Here are some important tips to follow when caring for your skin on a day-to-day basis:

1. Inspect your skin daily for any signs of redness or irritation.
2. Gently cleanse skin with a cleanser during bathing, and then pat dry.
3. If the skin is sore or red, cleanse after each incontinence episode.
4. Avoid scrubbing your skin as this can cause friction and injury.
5. Use moisturizing creams or lotions if your skin is dry.
6. Apply a barrier to help protect your skin if it is fragile or if you see any signs of redness (Do not apply moisturizer if applying barrier).
7. If you use absorbent pads, diapers or condom catheter systems, change them regularly to prevent problems from the urine touching the skin.
8. Air dry your skin when possible. Avoid the use of hair-dryers as this can burn or dry your skin.

### WHERE CAN I GET HELP?

Skin problems can usually be prevented by simple and basic care and the use of products. However, problems still do arise. Your nurse, physician, physiotherapist or pharmacist will be able to assist or offer suggestions.



There is also a book called

### "MISSION POSSIBLE: Your Canadian Undercover Guide to Incontinence Products".

You can obtain this guide by calling the Canadian Continenence Foundation at 1-800-265-9575.

*This information sheet was made possible thanks to an educational grant from A&D Personal Care Towelettes & Lotions.*

Many thanks to  
Ms. Shirley McSavanev,  
RN, PhN, ET,  
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for developing this  
fact sheet.

The Canadian Continenence  
Foundation extends  
additional thanks to  
the following individuals  
for their diligent input  
and review:

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