

If someone is reliant on continence products, care must be taken not to use heavy oil based or silicone based creams, such as Sudocrem. These tend to reduce the pads ability to absorb urine. If these creams are prescribed they should be applied thinly and the manufacturer's instruction followed about reapplication.

It is advisable to use a water based cream such as LBF or LBF spray if the skin is broken when using continence products (available on prescription).

Speak to your health care professional/ GP / pharmacist to find out the best products for your individual skin needs if you are still unsure.

## Bladder & Bowel Management

# Genital Skin Care

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The tissue in this area can be very delicate. Many conditions can cause issues with the integrity of skin in this area, leading to broken skin, skin irritation, bleeding, itching and discomfort.

### 3 KEY MESSAGES

1. Avoid irritants
2. Keep dry
3. Don't scratch or rub

### How should I care for my skin in this area?

Check the skin regularly to make sure it isn't broken.

Avoid products which can irritate the skin. These will include:

- **Soap, perfumed shower gels, bubble baths and shampoos** - these products can change the PH of your skin allowing it to dry out and become irritated. Unperfumed soap or soap free cleansers are kinder to the skin.
- **Cleansing wipes** - these can be too harsh for sensitive or irritated skin. Avoid cleansing wipes that contain alcohol.
- **Deodorants** - again these can cause irritation for some people.
- **Antiseptics** - these can be too harsh for this delicate area.
- **Talc** - should be avoided if you have any allergies to it. Also, if you have issues with continence it can hold urine against the skin causing further irritation.
- **Dyes in clothing** - for some this can cause irritation
- **Toilet paper** - some people react to certain brands, coloured paper or paper with additives such as scents or moisturising products.
- **Laundry detergents** - some of these can irritate the delicate genital skin even if it doesn't affect the rest of you. Use non-biological washing powders or laundry balls where possible and avoid fabric conditioners.
- **Sanitary products** (for women) - again change brand or size if you think these may be causing a problem. Remember sanitary towels are for absorbing menstrual flow. If you have continence issues wear specific pads for this.
- **Underwear** - if this causes excess heat and sweating it may cause irritation. Underwear that wicks away moisture can help. Carrying a change of underwear can help.

### How should I wash my genital area?

- Use your hands or a fresh flannel and cool / warm water. If the area is inflamed and irritated, an emollient cream can be used as a soap substitute. Try not to use very hot water or soak for prolonged periods.
- If the skin has become soaked with urine, washing with warm water can often be enough.
- Emollients are grease-based substances which help moisturise the skin. Emollients come in lotions, creams and ointments. Lotions have the lowest oil content and ointments have the highest oil content and tend to be greasier. Ointments are best for really dry skin.

### Tips for men

- Using a circular motion, gently wash the penis from tip downward.
- If the penis is uncircumcised, retract the foreskin, wash and rinse the tip, and replace the foreskin when finished.
- Wash and rinse the scrotum.

**If you require advice on which emollients to use contact your health care professional or pharmacist**

- Foam cleansers are helpful for individuals with incontinence as they don't alter the skin's PH hugely. These can be widely purchased from pharmacies.
- Pat the skin dry with a clean towel.
- Washing once a day is usually enough. Over washing can strip the natural oils from your skin and dehydrate skin.
- If the skin is broken down, products that promote a moist wound environment should be used. Your GP, pharmacist or community nurse can advise on suitable products once they have assessed your skin.
- Barrier creams tend to be used on intact skin and barrier films can be used on broken skin to act as a barrier against further irritation.