



PATIENT INFORMATION

Te mimi turuturu me  
te tiaki kiri

Incontinence and  
Skin Care

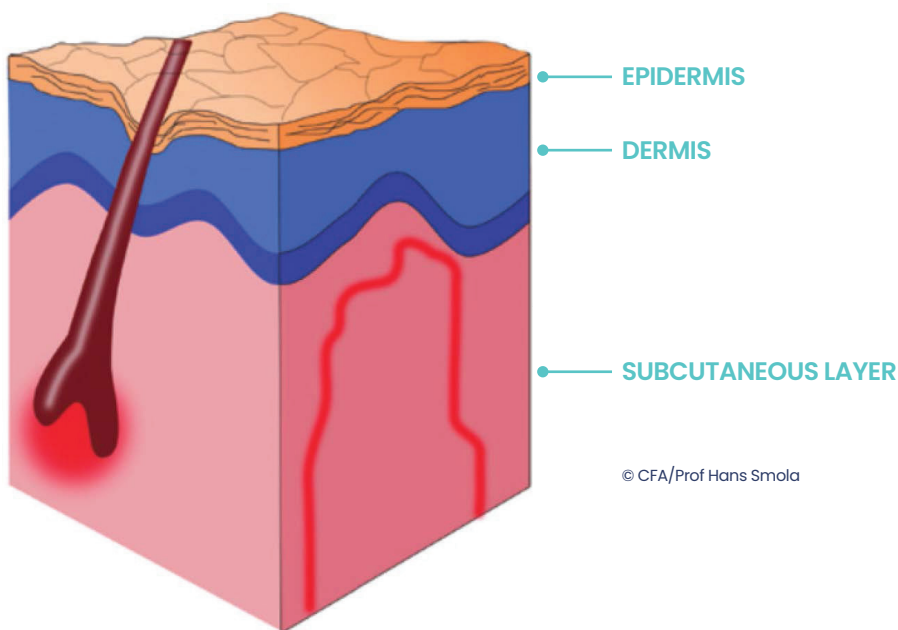


**Health New Zealand**  
Te Whatu Ora

## INCONTINENCE AND SKIN CARE

If you are experiencing incontinence, looking after your skin is important to avoid incontinence associated dermatitis.

Urine and faeces can damage the skin, causing redness, irritation and soreness. This can be distressing, uncomfortable and socially isolating. This booklet provides advice on how to protect your skin when you are experiencing incontinence.





## SKIN STRUCTURE

Skin is made up of three layers:

- 1. The epidermis (top layer).** This layer acts as the protective barrier to the outside world.
- 2. The dermis (second layer).** This layer is tough and elastic, containing blood vessels, lymph capillaries (to drain excess tissue fluids from around cells), sensory nerve endings, sweat glands and hair follicles. The collagen in this layer provides the skin with its strength and elasticity.
- 3. The subcutaneous layer.** This is the deepest layer and is made up of connective tissues and fat.

Skin has a natural protective layer which is slightly acidic 4.5–5.5. so cleansers need to be skin friendly with pH 4.5–5.5. Urine, bowel motion and perspiration on skin may increase the skin pH which will break down the protective skin layer. Bacteria can penetrate skin cells and cause incontinence associated dermatitis (IAD) and/or infection.

Advancing age, skin sensitivities, reduced mobility, poor memory and some medicines can also increase skin breakdown.

IAD is inflammation of the skin and can be accompanied by redness, blistering, excoriation and infection.



## FOLLOWING A SKIN CARE ROUTINE

### 1 CLEAN

- Cleaning and protecting your skin can prevent and heal IAD.
- Avoid using soaps which are made up of a mixture of alkalis and fatty acids. They have the potential to damage skin by raising the pH level.
- Avoid harsh skin products that contain alcohol, perfumes or disinfectants.
- Skin friendly cleansers are the best option. These come in emulsions, foams and sprays such as Secura Cleanser, fatty and non ionic cream soap substitutes. They help to loosen and remove dirt or irritants and restore and preserve the skin's barrier function.

#### How to apply a cleanser

- Spray or dab cleanser directly onto skin, especially after an incontinent episode or at least daily.
- Wait a few seconds to loosen faeces and/or urine then dab or carefully wipe with a damp washcloth.
- Do not use water to cleanse.
- Avoid harsh rubbing as this will damage the skin further.
- Choose well fitting, comfortable, secure and absorbent continence products.



## 2 PROTECT

- Place a thin layer of barrier cream such as Dimethicone cream 5% to unbroken skin or reddened skin to prevent skin damage from exposure to urine and/or faeces.
- Assess the skin at each toileting or pad change. Especially check perineum, genital areas, buttock crease and lower abdomen.
- Look for redness, skin breakdown, blisters, pain and other signs of infection.
- Wear appropriate continence products (pads).
- Inform your nurse or doctor if you are concerned.
- All aspects of incontinence including skin health deserve expert ongoing care and monitoring.
- Act promptly if skin is deteriorating, your wound changes in appearance or severity, and if there are signs and symptoms of infection. These include fever, pain, swelling, warmth, drainage, pus or odour.

## 3 HEALING BROKEN SKIN

- Cleanse first.
- Apply product such as Secura Proshield Plus™ to broken areas of skin. Dab or pat on to build a protective layer over affected area.
- This will help prevent direct contact with urine or faeces on the affected area.
- Remove cream with moisturising cleanser such as Secura Moisturising Cleanser™.
- Unsoiled cream can be left in place
- Do not apply to deep wounds
- Discard products after one month, or lid is lost or package damaged



## PROTECTING YOUR SKIN

- Feed skin from the inside out with good nutrition. Ensure you keep up a good fluid intake to hydrate the skin and flush out waste products and toxins from body.
- Concentrated (dark urine) can irritate the bladder lining, making it unstable and more prone to leaking and skin damage.
- Keep skin moisturised with a suitable moisturising product if dryness is a problem. Intact skin that is supple and moisturised is the first line of natural defence against damage.
- Moisturisers should be non-irritating and designed to preserve the skin's fluid content.
- Exercise daily to improve circulation, and shift position at least every two hours if you are being cared for by others.



## INFORMATION FOR YOUR DISTRICT NURSE AND GP

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### Other information (relevant medications, etc)

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### REFERENCES

- Skin Care & Incontinence – Continence Foundation of Australia, July 2020
- Adult Skin Care formulary and prevention and treatment of IAD (District) – Southern DHB 2014

## DISTRICT NURSING GISBORNE

Monday to Sunday (including public holidays)  
8am-4pm



421 Ormond Road, Gisborne



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