



Caring for Perianal Skin

Perianal skin care must be done in advance if possible to protect the skin around the anus from breakdown. After closure of a stoma, the perianal skin is very sensitive to new secretions in the area. In the setting of profuse diarrhea, the enzymes in the expelled GI material can be irritating to the skin if not kept clean and protected.

Cleansing the skin:

- Cleanse after each bowel movement or passing of a mucous. Try using a squirt bottle with warm water, a gentle shower head, or warm bath. When washing, gently cleanse with Balneol Lotion (available over the counter in most drugstores in the hemorrhoid section) and rinse lightly. You can also purchase and try no-rinse skin cleanser spray (Sween Periwash, Hollister Skin Cleanser, etc).
- Thoroughly pat the skin dry using good quality, unscented toilet paper, or a soft disposable cloth such as a Handiwipe or Sofnet. Twice daily cleanse your skin using warm running water (shower or bath).
- Do not use soap. Avoid scrubbing or scratching the skin.
- You may use “wet wipes” that have no alcohol for traveling or work.
- Dry well either by patting dry, air dry, or using a hair dryer on a cool setting.

Applying a skin barrier:

- Apply a moisture barrier ointment after cleansing to protect the skin from mucous and stool. Examples of skin barriers include Calmoseptine ointment, CriticAid, Kerodex #71, Desitin ointment, Zinc oxide, Proshield Plus and Butt Paste (this is found in the baby section).
- Apply as a thin layer to the skin around the anus and also slightly up into the anal opening by inserting your finger slightly.
- Wear an absorbent pad such as a mini or maxi pad to protect your clothes from discoloration by the skin barrier agents.

Repairing irritated perianal skin:

- Skin irritation can result from frequent stools, mechanical injury to the skin with vigorous cleaning, hard stools, fungal infections on the skin, or sensitivity to products used on the skin in this region.
- If you are having frequent, loose stools, as able make alterations in your medications or diet to decrease frequency of bowel movements.
- Increase the frequency of cleansing the perianal skin. Pat or blow-dry after each cleansing.
- Apply the protective barrier ointment covering all areas of the perianal skin. Try different barriers as some may work better than others.
- Wear cotton underclothes, avoiding nylon and polyester underclothes/panty hose until the irritation has healed.