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Good Continence Care: A Holistic Approach

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An aging population triggers an increased number of age-related diseases and ailments, among others a growing prevalence of incontinence. Today, it is estimated that 40-50 % of people over 80 suffers from some degree of incontinence and has a need for continence products to a greater or lesser extent. This document explores a holistic approach to continence care that considers most of the factors to which the incontinent person faces.

A holistic approach is crucial for good continence care

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An aging population triggers an increased number of age-related diseases and ailments, among others a growing prevalence of incontinence. Today, it is estimated that 40-50 % of people over 80 suffers from some degree of incontinence and has a need for continence products to a greater or lesser extent. Consequently, the total cost of continence care and treatment of skin conditions related to incontinence is expected to rise in the coming decades, straining budgets and resources in the care sector.

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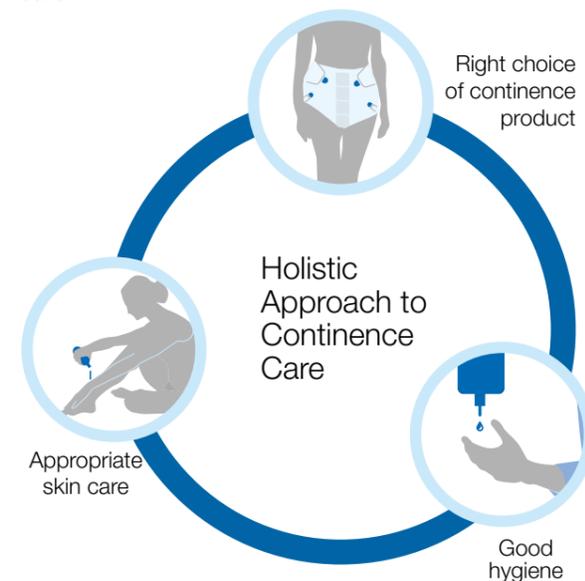
In a socio-economic perspective, continence care takes up a substantial part of the resources in the care sector. However, just as important is the effect of incontinence on the quality of life among elderly or handicapped people, since the widespread condition may significantly impact the life style, self-esteem and general well-being of people.

A holistic, yet personalized approach to continence care is needed

Good continence care is the sum of many factors that all have to be considered in one, holistic approach. The three main elements of the holistic approach to continence care comprise:

1. Right choice and use of continence products, i.e. pads, fixation products and protective bedding
2. Careful and appropriate skin care
3. Good hygiene - from gloves to waste management

Profound knowledge and application of the individual elements in continence care is extremely important, but it is not enough. The key to good continence care lies in the interaction between the different routines and products that make a difference in the daily continence care.



A holistic continence solution should be designed and implemented to improve quality of life and make life with incontinence as easy as possible. During daytime, the continence solution must promote the desired life style; while during night time, the continence solution must support a good night's sleep. At the same time, the continence solution should be designed and implemented to actively prevent complications like Incontinence associated dermatitis and repeated urinary tract infections.

While a holistic approach is needed in general, it is important to stress that no two people are alike. Differences in age, personality, life style and circumstances call for a personalized approach to continence care.

To achieve the holistic, yet personalized approach to continence care is not easy, since research and evidence-based knowledge on the subject is limited and relies on good clinical practice. From best practice studies carried out by Abena over the last decades, however, a number of principles for holistic continence care have emerged.

In the following we will go through the main elements that put together pave the way for a holistic and personalized approach.

1. Right choice and use of continence products (pads, fixation products, protective bedding)

If continence products, fixation products and protective bedding are used correctly and combined with the right skin care products, the risk of Incontinence Associated Dermatitis is more or less eliminated.

Choosing the right continence product:

1. Map the requirements according to urination patterns of each person
2. Select the right size
3. Select the right type: open or closed
4. Ensure that the absorbency rates: from mild to heavy Prefer a breathable continence product with soft surface



First, let's take a look at the continence product: Selecting the right continence product is an art in itself. First of all, there is the size of the product, where vanity and freedom of movement battle risk of leakage and cost. When choosing size and quality, it is extremely important that the absorbency rate meets the actual requirements of the individual patient.

Classification of products from mild to heavy incontinence can guide the choice. Furthermore a conventional or digital wetness indicator can support choosing the right product size and scheduling of product changing and toileting. The number of required continence product changes varies and depends on many factors, among others urination patterns of the individual person, toileting regime and local standards that in some cases set up specific requirements. Usually, a minimum 3 continence products are allocated each 24-hour period.

Another choice to be made is whether to choose an open or closed continence product. In most situations, the open continence product or shaped pad is the preferred solution due to the fit that is more or less invisible and allows freedom of movement. An open continence product requires fixation pants, which come in a large number of designs.

A breathable continence product with a soft surface that drains moisture is the choice number one to avoid maceration of the skin that may lead to IAD or ultimately pressure ulcers.

Don't stop drinking! Sufficient liquid is essential to health and well-being.

Therefore:

- Drink as much as you normally do and feel like drinking
- In general, it is recommended to drink 1.5-2 liters per day
- All drinks count; however, if you drink large amounts of coffee or alcohol the incontinence may get worse
- Consider how much you drink after 6 pm to avoid having your sleep interrupted several times during the night



Facts about Urinary Tract Infection (UTI) and how to prevent it

The risk of developing UTI is bigger, if you suffer from incontinence. The relation between continence product use and UTI has not yet been fully clarified. However, it is possible to take precautionary measures by following simple routines in choice and use of continence products, ensure regular visits to the toilet, and good hygiene.



Therefore:

- Go to the lavatory every 3-4 hours
- Dry yourself from the front and backwards
- Change continence product after each visit to the toilet, even if it dry
- To put on the continence product from the front and backwards
- Avoid touching the inside of the continence product
- Avoid the wet continence product touching bedding or furniture to avoid spreading of bacteria
- When washing intimate areas, it is important that the natural pH of the body is left unchanged to avoid growth of bacteria

If a fixation product is required:

Fixation products are used to ensure that pads or continence products are fitted correctly, also during physical exercise. Ordinary underwear is not suited for this due to design and elasticity. Fixation products are available in several designs, with or without pant legs.

Use of protective sheets and bedding to ensure a good night's sleep:

If the continence product is properly sized with a tight fit, there is no need for extra protection during nighttime. For some, however, protective bedding

is an extra precaution that enables uninterrupted sleep. When choosing to use a protective sheet, it is important to ensure that the sheet is adapted to the other products that are used. For instance, protective sheets may limit the effect of decompression mattresses used to prevent pressure ulcers.

Digital incontinence products open new opportunities in continence care

Digital continence products are a new option that supports the personalized approach to continence care for specific types of incontinence, e.g. for people with cognitive or neurological challenges, unpredictable caring needs or need for precise timing of continence product change.

The digital product puts the needs of the individual center-stage. The real-time data provided by the wearable sensors integrated into the product, allows continuous and personalized optimization of the care



Figure 1: Abena Nova, the intelligent incontinence product for everyday use

- 1. ACCURATE BUILT-IN SENSORS:** Residents wear an Abena Nova continence product with imprinted sensors and a small attachable clip.
- 2. STABLE INFRASTRUCTURE:** Data is transmitted to the cloud irrespective of the facility's physical environment and IT set-up.
- 3. REAL TIME ACTIONABLE INSIGHTS:** Caregivers are notified (tablet, PC, smart phones) and take action.

to meet individual needs. For instance, the digital products can help eliminate unnecessary changes during the night to avoid sleep disturbances. Or secure the use of right size products during day and night and adjusted for individual needs as regards freedom of movement, urination patterns, etc.

Recent experimentation and testing of digital continence products have proved a number of advantages for residents, care givers and institutions.

- For residents, the digital continence product enhances quality of life through improved comfort, retained dignity and reduced risk of skin irritation and infections.
- For care givers, the time spent on continence care can be optimized and more time can be spent on other care activities. The easy-to-use clip and app allow easy integration into the daily work routines.
- For institutions, the digital continence product promises savings in incontinence-related costs, improved work environment for staff, and a concerted effort to optimize and improve care routines.

2. Careful and appropriate skin care

The skin is highly susceptible to extended exposure to urine or faeces for longer periods of time. The natural barrier function of the skin is eroded, and the need to nurture and moisturize the skin becomes essential to avoid skin irritation, or worse – infections such as IAD and resulting pressure ulcers.

Different degrees of skin irritation or IAD require use of different products. However, the following 3-step process can be used to ensure that skin irritation is prevented or treated in the best possible way no matter the stage of the skin condition.

In connection with each change of incontinence products, it is important to rinse, protect and restore the skin. The following recommendations apply to good skin care:

After cleansing and treatment with moisture and barrier products, make sure to use high-quality continence products and bed protection sheets that allow the skin to breathe.





3. Good hygiene - from gloves to waste management

Good hygiene in continence care provides a sense of well-being, prevents infections and limits the risk of transmission of diseases from one person to others.

Gloves are indispensable in continence care:

Care-givers must always wear disposable gloves when assisting with personal care in order to avoid contagion. It is important to change gloves, when switching from one routine to the next and when the continence care is concluded.

Disposable gloves come in many different materials. For continence care, use of Latex or Nitril gloves is recommended.

Use bed protection to maximize hygiene:

It is important to use, liquid-proof sheets when the patient is washed in bed. The protective sheet prevents spreading of bacteria and liquids to the bed, bedding, mattress, pillow, etc. If the sheet is disposable it should not be reused, but must be discarded after use. Washable sheets should be washed after use.

Handle waste with care:

Waste such as used continence products, disposable sheets, gloves, etc. must be disposed of in a responsible way to avoid contagion to surroundings and personnel handling the waste.

Therefore, waste products must be wrapped in a tight plastic bag directly after use. To avoid spread of contagious diseases, you have to use one bag per task. It is recommended to use pedal bins to avoid contact with lids, handles, etc. when you dispose of the waste.

If there is a risk of clothing or work clothes becoming contaminated with bacteria, use a disposable apron. Disposable apron prevents contamination of clothes or workwear, eg. by handling excretions and dense care contacts. When removing an apron, be aware that the contaminated exterior is not touched and that the clothing is not contaminated by the outside of the plastic cover. The disposable apron should never be reused as there is a risk of spread of infection. If you have also used gloves, always remove them before removing the apron. The apron is discarded immediately after use.

Maintain good toileting habits

Incontinent patients need to go to the toilet like everybody else. The small daily routines help sustain quality of life and prevent urinary tract infections.

Therefore:

- Make sure to go to the toilet every 3-4 hours
- If you need reminding set an alarm
- Go to the toilet before going to bed
- Empty the bladder every time. If difficult, take a few steps and go back to the toilet



APPENDIX:

How to achieve optimum continence care tailored to individual needs

The following continence care principles have been developed by Abena based on in-depth knowledge and many years of experience as a leading supplier of a wide range of incontinence products.



Select the continence product as small as possible but as large as necessary - small products are easier to apply correctly and are more comfortable to wear.



Review whether a two piece (shaped continence product and fixation pants) or a one piece is appropriate. Experience shows that most needs can be addressed optimally with a two piece combination. The product can sit close to the body, regardless of body shape and build.



If relevant - use sensor supported wetness indicator or other digital tools as a basis for decision on continence aid use for day and night. The system will continuously analyse input data and provide relevant ongoing advice.



Maintain fluid intake of 1.5 – 2 litres daily unless restricted for medical reasons.



Establish good routines for toileting where possible. It is normal to go to the toilet every 3-4 hours during daytime.



Usually, a minimum 3 continence products are allocated each 24-hour period and usage will depend on the actual voiding pattern and toileting regime.



A good night's sleep should be prioritised.



When changing continence products, the skin needs to be cleansed and dried. Be always aware of IAD prevention.



Be aware of the hygiene. Use of disposables in continence care combined with thorough waste management reduces the risk of infection from one person to the next. It also prevents bacteria spreading from one area of the body to other areas.



If the product is applied correctly and is dimensioned for the actual need there should not be problems with product-related leakage. Consult the application guide when needed.