



MANAGING ODOR FROM URINARY & ANAL INCONTINENCE

What causes odor in the perineal area?

Odor can be the result of urinary or anal incontinence when some of the urine or stool remains on the skin. Urine odor is usually not due to an infection, but may be due to:

- Concentrated urine from not drinking enough fluids
- Certain foods may cause a strong urine odor
- Sweat glands in the perineum (area between your legs)
- Vaginal bacteria

What can I do about it?

Odor from incontinence:

- It is important to thoroughly clean the area between your legs, and your legs if necessary, after any leakage of urine or stool. Sometimes wiping with toilet paper is just not enough. There are a variety of cleansers or cleansing wipes that allow frequent cleansing without causing irritation to the skin, and don't have to be rinsed off. Some are available in individual packages, or you may want to try pre-moistened, alcohol free baby wipes in the small hard case. Keep a supply of these "wipes" handy, carry some in your purse, and use them after an episode of incontinence.
- Many women are concerned about the cost of pads or other absorbent products, so will wear the same one until it is saturated. It is best, for your skin and for your odor concerns, if you change these pads each time you notice they are damp. There are several websites available that offer absorbent products. Click on the following link to view information on website links to sanitary products. Personal preferences, and the large variety of choices, make it necessary to find what best suits your needs. Click on the following link to view information on sanitary protection. Shop around on the internet or at discount stores to obtain your best price. Buying in larger quantities is sometimes more economical. Some women keep an "emergency kit" – a lined cosmetic type bag that will fit in your purse – with some wipes, pads, zip lock baggies, and fresh underwear – just in case. If your leakage warrants it, carry a larger purse that will hold a change of slacks to add to your "emergency kit". Remember to include a 2-gallon size zip lock freezer bag to hold any wet clothing.

- After bathing, apply a moisturizer and/or barrier cream to the area. A moisturizer will keep the skin soft and pliable. A barrier cream that is water repellent will protect the skin from urine or stool. Look for those that contain petroleum jelly, zinc oxide, cocoa butter, kaolin, lanolin, or paraffin. "Old fashioned" remedies include Desitin ointment, Barbazol shaving cream (in the tube) or A&D ointment.

It is best to try to control odors by natural means rather than spray "cover ups" or perineal deodorant products. They frequently attempt to cover up urine odor but just add another fragrance to the mix. The chemicals in these products may actually irritate the skin in this area.

Make sure you are drinking six 8-ounce glasses of water a day to prevent your urine from becoming concentrated, and therefore more odorous. This will also help to prevent constipation.

Odor from diet

- Some people recommend limiting foods such as onions, garlic, asparagus and fatty meats for several days to see if the urine odor changes.

Deodorizing tablets (Derifil, Nullo, Devrom, and Chlorofresh) may help reduce urine odor. They can be taken orally. There are some reports that vitamin C may help. You should discuss these options with your physician.

- Some people report that taking an alfalfa pill four times a day reduces odor and does not interfere with any other medication. Again, this should be discussed with your physician.
- Many people experience a stronger urine odor from drinking strong coffee. You might try limiting your coffee intake to see if this improves odor from urine.
- Foods that produce gas sometimes also increase the odor of the stool. Unfortunately, everyone metabolizes food differently, and it is not possible to tell what foods might increase the odor of your urine or stools. Adjust your fiber intake so that you get the desired result without increasing the odor of your stools. Click on the following link to view information on fiber facts.

Odor from sweat glands

- All sweat gland secretions are basically the same components as urine, so it is not uncommon to have a urine smell in the perineal area which may be the result of sweating.
- Vigorous exercise will increase the sweat from these sweat glands as well as those located elsewhere in the body. Bathing or showering after exercise or activity, with attention to the perineal area, will help
- Being overweight leads to sweat or moisture “trapping”, making evaporation difficult. Wearing synthetic undergarments may increase the odor. Wearing underwear with a cotton crotch may help.
- Avoid seafood, liver and egg yolks for a few days to see if this makes any difference.
- Take a bath or shower daily. Use wipes to clean your perineal area as needed during the day to “freshen up”.
- Change underwear frequently if this is a problem. Put an extra pair or two in a pretty floral cosmetic bag, along with a few plastic zip lock bags and wipes, and place in your purse. If you sense an odor while you are out, simply go to the restroom, cleanse thoroughly with a wipe, and change into a fresh pair of underpants. Place the used pair in a plastic bag, and back into the cosmetic bag.
- Avoid douching. Most odors are external rather than internal.

Odor from vaginal bacteria

- A fishy odor from the vaginal area can sometimes represent a bacterial vaginosis. If you think the perineal odor smells fishy, contact your physician to rule out this condition.
- Some vaginal discharge is normal. If the quality and quantity of your vaginal discharge changes, contact your physician for instructions.

How can I remove urine odor?

Be prepared with a change of clothing if your underwear or clothing becomes damp from urine or soiled from stool. After an episode of incontinence, make sure to place your clothing in the wash. Just because it is dry doesn't mean it is odor-free. Sometimes adding some vinegar to the wash cycle can help to “cut” the urine odor from clothing, but make sure it will not harm delicates. In addition, there are several brands of stain removers that claim to remove urine or stool.

Although it is wise to be concerned about odor from urine or stool, many women are extra sensitive about the potential for odor when none is actually present. For some women, these problems evoke embarrassment, guilt, and shame. They assume “everyone knows”, when perhaps no one can tell. As they come to see this as a medical issue, they may have a more realistic estimation of the problem. If this describes you, ask a trusted friend or family member to tell you about any urine or stool odor.

To remove odors from mattresses, some experts recommend using a solution of equal parts vinegar to water. Once the mattress has dried, baking soda can be applied on the stain, rubbed in, and then vacuumed.