QUICK FACTS: FOR MANAGING AT-RISK SKIN

At-risk skin refers to skin that has a higher potential for developing problems like breakdown, damage, or tears due to intrinsic or extrinsic factors, conditions, or comorbidities that compromise its barrier function.[1,2]

- **It is characterized by a weakened or compromised skin barrier, making it more susceptible to damage and infections.[2]**
- **Early identification and intervention can help prevent or minimize skin damage and associated complications.[2]**

Clinical conditions that contribute to at-risk skin breakdown include pressure injury (PI), incontinence-associated dermatitis (IAD), medical adhesive-related skin injury (MARSI), and moisture-associated skin damage (MASD).[2,3]

- Risk factors associated with MASD include excessive perspiration, incontinence, deep body folds, pressure-related injuries, and inadequate sebum production, indicating an interrelation between PI, IAD, and MASD.[2,3]
- Health conditions that contribute to the risk of skin breakdown include diabetes mellitus, obesity, malnutrition, immobility, and certain chronic illnesses such as cardiovascular, renal, and liver disorders.[2,3]

Gentle cleansing practices are key for those living with at-risk skin.[3] Gentle cleansing using mild, fragrance-free cleansing agents with a pH of 4 to 5 can reduce skin barrier breakdown.[2] Hot water should be avoided, and skin should be patted dry after cleansing.[2,3]

Moisturizing twice a day is recommended to protect the skin for those with at-risk skin, particularly after cleansing.[2] Moisturizers that contain fatty acids, ceramides, glycerin, or plant oils help to hydrate and provide a barrier to the skin.[2]

- Humectants are common ingredients in moisturizers that are beneficial for skin moisturizing by trapping humidity in the skin and preventing moisture loss through evaporation.[2] Common humectants include glycerin, hyaluronic acid, and lactic acid.[2]
- Emollients in moisturizers soften the skin by trapping moisture in the skin to reduce transepidermal water loss.[2] Emollients with high lipid content, including lanolin, fatty acids, and plant oils, can improve skin barrier function regeneration.[2]
- Occlusives work to seal in moisture by creating a hydrophobic barrier over the skin.[2] Occlusives are oil-based moisturizers and can include petroleum, zinc oxide, and dimethicone.[2,4]

It is important to manage excessive moisture by managing incontinence.[3] It is recommended to incorporate appropriate incontinence products and behavioral interventions to assist in moisture management.[3]

Minimizing friction and shear damage caused by medical devices or adhesives is a key consideration for managing at-risk skin.[3]

- **Foam dressings, thin hydrocolloids, film dressings, or other barrier products can be used beneath medical devices to reduce moisture, friction, and shear damage.[3] A soft, multi-layer silicone foam dressing is recommended to prevent damage including pressure injuries.[5]**
- **When adhesive tapes are necessary, careful selection of adhesive tapes, including those based on silicone technology, may help prevent skin damage.[3]**
- **Film-forming polymers and cyanoacrylates are also beneficial to provide skin barrier protection.[2,4]**

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