

FACT SHEET

HEALTH & HYGIENE BENEFITS OF ABSORBENT HYGIENE PRODUCTS & PERSONAL CARE WET WIPES

Introduction

Over the past 50 years absorbent hygiene products such as baby diapers, incontinence products, feminine protection pads and personal care wipes have all become essential features of modern day life. These products are so pervasive and so much part of every day life that they are now taken for granted by millions of people throughout the world. Their increased use has been accompanied by dramatic improvements in skin health and hygiene; particularly in the incidence of diaper dermatitis (nappy rash). Prior to the widespread use of modern absorbent hygiene products, diaper dermatitis was a very common occurrence which parents and carers struggled to control because it was difficult to keep skin dry. The ability of modern absorbent hygiene products to reduce leakage has also been important in preventing contamination and the transmission of infectious diseases.

The absorbent hygiene products and wet wipes industry works hard to maintain the highest standards in its product stewardship. It invests heavily in assuring the safety of its products including research into the linkages between the use of absorbent hygiene products and skin health and general hygiene.

Manufacturers also seek the input of independent experts in the fields of dermatology, paediatrics and incontinence on the health, hygiene, safety and sustainability attributes of disposable absorbent hygiene products.

Good skin health and hygiene affects wellbeing, ability to function, comfort and self esteem. It is essential for good quality of life. Prevention of skin infections alleviates concern for parents and carers and reduces the costs incurred when medical intervention becomes necessary.

Absorbent Hygiene Products, Skin Health and Hygiene

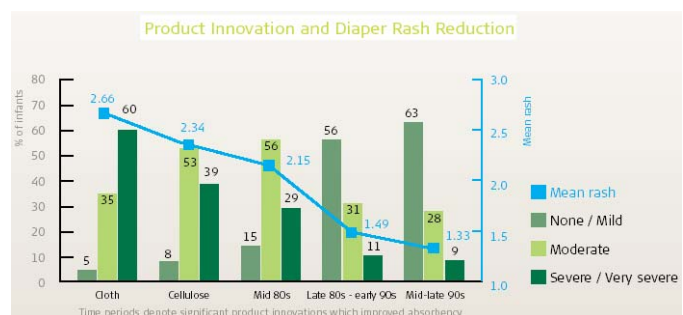
Over the last twenty years absorbent hygiene products have contributed to improved skin health and hygiene thanks to the use of:

- Innovative top sheet material through which fluids quickly penetrate; this helps to reduce skin wetness;
- Superabsorbent material which can absorb many times its own weight of liquid. This helps to hold the urine away from the skin and faeces, thereby preventing conditions likely to lead to skin health problems;
- Breathable outer covers which prevent leakage while allowing part of the humidity in the product to evaporate. This helps to limit temperature increase in the covered area which can help prevent the development of conditions that lead to skin health problems. Breathable materials also improve the overall condition of the skin as they allow air into the covered area.

Clinical studies have demonstrated that absorbent hygiene products based on superabsorbent materials technology keep the skin drier and that a more stable skin pH with less rashes is achieved with disposable diapers than with home-laundried cloth diapers.

For incontinent people, a holistic approach of using modern absorbent hygiene products in combination with appropriate skin care and cleansing routines and products can eliminate dermatitis and maintain good skin health.

Thorough and systematic tests have been performed in various parts of the world and under a very diverse range of conditions on the use of external feminine care products and have shown no adverse skin effects.



Wet wipes, Skin Health and Hygiene

Wet wipes are used for baby hygiene, facial cleansing and intimate personal hygiene (feminine wipes, incontinence wipes and moist toilet tissue) as well as household, industrial, medical and institutional cleaning. Their use has become much more widespread in recent years.

Modern wipes do not provoke skin irritation; scientific literature confirms that current products have a skin mildness comparable to that of water and a cleansing material such as cotton wool.

The portability of wet wipes also has important hygiene benefits. They enable users more easily to maintain and even raise both personal hygiene standards and the cleanliness of their surroundings whether it is in the workplace, at home, or in medical institutions

What the experts say:

“Things have changed a lot since the 1980s when more than 20 percent of the babies I treated presented with diaper dermatitis and some of those cases were very severe; that meant for example that more than 11,000 babies in Milan could be affected at any time. At that time, the use of old style cloth diapers and the application of steroid based treatment creams compounded the problem”

Professor Carlo Gelmetti, Department of Clinical Dermatology, University of Milan, Italy

“Concerns about contamination of patients with bacteria which cause septicaemia are very high indeed in the UK health service and amongst the public in general. Any tool, including disinfectant wipes, that can be employed to keep hospitals and other institutions clean of such bacteria would be welcomed by health managers.”

Colin Michie, Senior Consultant Lecturer in Paediatrics, Ealing NHS Trust, UK

“In Germany there is a network of dermatologists which pools patch test data. I can confirm that no trends of irritation and/or allergy have been observed with the increasing use of wet wipes and absorbent hygiene products in general.”

Professor Dr Peter Elsner, Clinic for Dermatology and Dermatological Allergies, Friedrich Schiller University, Jena, Germany

“Wipes may not only be cost effective, their use in institutions and in peoples homes may reduce the time that is needed to clean with soap and water leaving time for other important caring activities.”

Dr Mandy Fader, Centre for Clinical Science & Technology, Southampton University, UK

“There are two obvious characteristics for product users in regard to quality of life; leakage control and odour prevention. The superabsorbent material used in disposable baby and adult diapers creates these two characteristics by absorbing the urine into the core of the diaper and by keeping it there.”

Professor Jan Faergemann, Department of Dermatology, Sahlgrenska University Hospital, Sweden

Summary

- Technological advances by the industry have produced innovative products which offer real benefits in skin care, dryness, and leakage protection.
- Skin health benefits are derived from the reduction in excessive skin wetness which modern disposable baby diapers and incontinence care products prevent.
- The widespread use of modern disposable baby diapers has led to a dramatic reduction in the incidence of diaper dermatitis.
- There is no evidence of skin health problems related to the use of external feminine care products.
- By reducing leakage modern absorbent hygiene products play an important role in preventing contamination and the transmission of infectious diseases.
- Today’s personal care wipes are safe and convenient and are appropriate for use with children of all ages and with adults, including those with compromised skin or medical problems.

Safety Assurance

Absorbent Hygiene Products and wet wipes sold in the EU must comply with the European General Product Safety Directive and where they contain lotions and fragrances, must also comply with the requirements of the European Cosmetics Directive.

Our industry does more than simply comply with the legal framework to ensure that our products are safe. We conduct our own safety evaluation programmes and as individual companies we continuously monitor the market, our products in use and any other concerns consumers may have in using them.

Quality of life

Absorbent hygiene products and personal wet wipes improve the quality of life of both the users and their carers. They offer:

- improved skin health
- hygiene
- discretion
- increased mobility and flexibility
- reliability
- convenience

The Industry

The members of EDANA who manufacture absorbent hygiene products and wet wipes employ some 100,000 people in Europe, making a substantial contribution to the economic wellbeing of families and communities in the countries of Europe. In 2006 some 20,000 of those were directly employed in the manufacture of absorbent hygiene products in Europe. This is, matched by a similar number upstream within raw materials supplier industries; not to mention those employed downstream in logistics and commercial operations.

The industry invests widely in its European product development and manufacturing facilities with over 50 facilities spread across some 20 countries in the region.

