

Addressing Skin Care Needs of the Bariatric Client

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BACKGROUND

- **More than one-third** (34.9% or 78.6 million) of U.S. adults are obese.
- **Bariatric medicine** involves the control and treatment of obese individuals.
- The bariatric population have **specialized skin and wound care needs**.
- **Few resources exist for nurses** to understand challenges associated with skin care in the bariatric population. This project seeks to identify challenges associated with bariatric skin care, clarify protocols for that care, and offer suggestions for change.

PURPOSE

- The primary purpose of this **evidence-based literature review** was to identify challenges associated with bariatric skin care and identify protocols for care.
- A secondary purpose was to understand **how current practice at our hospital compared with evidence-based practice**, and to make recommendations for change.

KEYWORDS SEARCHED

- Skin care
- Nursing
- Dermatitis
- Bariatric
- Intervention
- Moisture

PRIMARY FINDINGS

- No comprehensive clinical guideline was found in our literature search.
- Important areas for the bariatric client include:
 - Proper assessment
 - Bathing, toileting, and genital care
 - Skin fold and moisture management, and effective pressure redistribution.
- Maintenance of skin integrity for the bariatric population is important, as loss of skin integrity can lead to:
 - Infection and pain
 - Odor and psychosocial concerns such as loss of independence and self-esteem

INTERTRIGINOUS DERMATITIS (ITD)

Intertriginous dermatitis (ITD) is a painful conditions of concern to bariatric clients, defined **as redness and inflammation of the skin caused by prolonged exposure to moisture accompanied by friction**, as often seen in skin folds, and it raises the risk for denudation, infection, and cellulitis.

PREVENTION OF ITD

- Examined patients unclothed and lying as flat as possible.
- Pay particular attention to abdominal skin folds, the pubic area, and the skin under the arms and breasts.
- Recommendations for treatment of ITD.

NURSING CARE OF ITD

- Keep skin folds clean and dry to promote healing and prevent breakdown.
- Use of cleansing product with a pH similar to 5.5 (the same as healthy skin).
- Avoid application of CHG, alcohol, and perfumes which can further damage skin.
- Reduce friction with the use of light and loose-fitting clothing.
- Promote a dry environment within the skin fold by using a specialty textile to wick away moisture.
- Use medicated powders as prescribed by a physician .

SECONDARY FINDINGS

A search of our policies revealed no policy specifically pertaining to bariatric skin care.

CURRENT PRACTICES AT SMJH

Current practice includes

- ✓ Regular skin assessment
- ✓ Pressure ulcer prevention (PUP) assessment and interventions
- ✓ The use of specialty mattresses and bariatric equipment
- ✓ Allevyn Gentle Border Multisite dressings on areas vulnerable to pressure
- ✓ Medicated powders as prescribed

INNOVATION AT SMJH

SMJH is supplementing usual care with a new product, a polyester polyurethane coated fabric with an antimicrobial silver complex that allows for moisture and bacteria management when tucked into skin folds. This promotes skin integrity while hopefully reducing the need for medicated powders.

IMPLICATIONS FOR NURSING AT SMJH

- Our finding suggest that **bariatric skin care is largely based on custom** or clinical opinion, which may hinder the nurse's ability to provide optimum care.
- **Client's weight may make care more difficult** for providers, suggesting that safe staffing levels and access to bariatric-appropriate equipment is critical to providing evidence-based care.
- There is a **need for an comprehensive policy** in order to standardize interventions both at SMJH and for overall nursing practice.
- Policy development focus on the **treatment and prevention of ITD** as well as more widely applicable strategies for bariatric skin care.

