

Standard of Practice: Perineal (Peri) Care for Personal Support Workers (PSWs)

Effective: 2026

Purpose

This Standard of Practice provides guidance to **Personal Support Workers (PSWs)** in delivering **safe, respectful, hygienic, and dignified perineal care** to individuals across care settings. Proper peri care is essential to prevent infection, maintain skin integrity, promote comfort, and uphold client dignity.

Scope

This standard applies to PSWs providing care in:

- Home and community care
- Long-term care (LTC)
- Retirement homes
- Hospitals (within PSW scope)
- Adult day programs and supportive living environments

This standard is endorsed and supported by:

- Ontario Personal Support Workers Association
 - Canadian Support Workers Association
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Definition

Perineal (Peri) Care is the cleansing and care of the genital and anal areas to maintain hygiene, prevent infection, and promote comfort. It may be required following elimination, incontinence episodes, menstruation, catheter use, or when an individual is unable to perform their own personal hygiene.

Principles of Practice

PSWs must ensure peri care is provided with:

- **Dignity and respect**
- **Privacy and consent**
- **Infection prevention and control**
- **Client-centred and trauma-informed care**
- **Cultural sensitivity**
- **Clear communication**

Responsibilities of the PSW

The PSW is responsible for:

- Following the **Plan of Care**
- Using **proper infection control techniques**
- Explaining the procedure and obtaining consent
- Maintaining the person's dignity at all times
- Observing and reporting abnormalities
- Documenting care provided according to employer policy

Equipment Required

- Non-sterile gloves
- Warm water and mild soap or peri-cleanser
- Washcloths or disposable wipes
- Towels
- Disposable underpads (if needed)
- Clean brief or undergarments
- Barrier cream or ointment (if ordered)
- Waste disposal bag

Procedure

Preparation

1. Perform hand hygiene.
 2. Gather all required supplies.
 3. Explain the procedure clearly and respectfully.
 4. Ensure privacy (close doors/curtains).
 5. Position the person safely and comfortably.
 6. Apply gloves.
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Peri Care for Females

1. Clean **from front to back** (pubic area toward anus).
 2. Use a clean section of the cloth for each wipe.
 3. Gently separate labia to clean skin folds if tolerated.
 4. Rinse and pat dry thoroughly.
 5. Apply barrier cream if prescribed.
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Peri Care for Males

1. Clean the tip of the penis first.
 2. If uncircumcised, gently retract foreskin, clean, and **return foreskin to normal position**.
 3. Clean the shaft, scrotum, and groin folds.
 4. Clean the anal area last.
 5. Rinse and pat dry.
 6. Apply barrier cream if prescribed.
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Peri Care Following Incontinence

- Change soiled briefs promptly.
 - Clean skin thoroughly to prevent breakdown.
 - Assess for redness, rashes, or open areas.
 - Ensure skin is completely dry before re-applying products.
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Infection Prevention and Control

- Always use **gloves**
 - Perform hand hygiene **before and after care**
 - Clean from **least contaminated to most contaminated area**
 - Never reuse cloth sections
 - Dispose of waste according to policy
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Observations and Reporting

The PSW must report immediately any:

- Redness, rash, swelling, or open areas
 - Signs of infection (odour, discharge, warmth)
 - Pain, discomfort, or refusal of care
 - Bruising or unexplained injuries
 - Changes in continence patterns
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Documentation

PSWs must document:

- Peri care provided
- Condition of skin
- Use of barrier products
- Client response or refusal
- Any abnormalities reported

Documentation must be factual, timely, and objective.

Professional Boundaries

- Maintain professional, respectful behaviour at all times
- Avoid unnecessary exposure
- Use appropriate language



- Be mindful of trauma history and personal preferences
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Limitations

PSWs **must not**:

- Diagnose skin conditions
 - Apply medicated products unless authorized
 - Perform procedures outside their scope
 - Ignore refusals or signs of distress
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Education and Competency

PSWs **must**:

- Be trained in peri care during certification
 - Receive additional training when care complexity increases
 - Demonstrate ongoing competency as required by employer or association standards
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References

- Ontario Personal Support Workers Association (OPSWA). *Standards of Practice for PSWs*.
- Canadian Support Workers Association (CANSWA). *Professional Care Standards*.
- Public Health Ontario. *Infection Prevention and Control Practices*.
- Mosby's Textbook for Nursing Assistants / Personal Support Workers (5th Edition).