



Professional Practice Guidelines: Perineal (Peri) Care for Personal Support Workers (PSWs)

Effective: 2026

Purpose

These Professional Practice Guidelines provide 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

These guidelines apply 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

These guidelines are endorsed and supported by:

- Ontario Personal Support Workers Association
- Canadian Support Workers Association

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 informed consent
- Infection prevention and control practices
- Client-centred and trauma-informed care
- Cultural sensitivity
- Clear and respectful communication

Responsibilities of the PSW

The PSW is responsible for:

- Following the individual's Plan of Care
- Using proper infection control techniques
- Explaining the procedure and obtaining consent
- Maintaining the person's dignity and comfort at all times
- Observing and reporting abnormalities
- Documenting care provided according to organizational 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 by closing doors or 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.

Peri Care for Males

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

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.

Infection Prevention and Control

- Always wear 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 organizational policy

Observations and Reporting

The PSW must immediately report:

- 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

Documentation

PSWs must document:

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

Documentation must be factual, timely, and objective.

Professional Boundaries

PSWs must:

- Maintain professional, respectful behaviour at all times
- Avoid unnecessary exposure
- Use appropriate, respectful language
- Be mindful of trauma history and personal preferences

Limitations

PSWs must not:

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

Education and Competency

PSWs must:

- Receive peri care training during certification
- Participate in additional education 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). Professional Practice Guidelines for PSWs
- Canadian Support Workers Association (CANSWA). Professional Care Guidelines
- Public Health Ontario. Infection Prevention and Control Practices
- Mosby's Textbook for Nursing Assistants / Personal Support Workers (5th Edition)