Only people living with incontinence can truly understand the pain and discomfort caused by Incontinence Associated Dermatitis (IAD)

**Skin function:**
Your skin is the body’s largest organ and serves an extremely important role in maintaining a person’s health and well-being. The skin acts as protective barrier to the outside world, while maintaining fluid levels inside the body and regulating temperature.

The outer layer of the skin forms a slightly acidic protection layer known as the “acid mantle” with a pH value of approximately 5.5. This will protect skin from bacterial growth and infection. If the acid mantle becomes disrupted, the skin will be more prone to infection and damage.

**Incontinence and skin pH:**
The urea and ammonia in urine can affect pH balance of skin (4.5 – 5.5) causing it to become too alkaline (7 or more), exposing it to greater risk to bacterial infection.

**Prevention:**
**Continence Pads**
The top layer of continence pads is very important because it contacts the skin’s surface. It should be designed to maintain a skin pH value of 5.5 to ensure alkaline influences like sweat, detergents and urine do not damage the natural acid mantle of the skin. By ensuring the top layer of the pad complements the skin at pH 5.5, it is also possible to inhibit the growth of harmful bacteria and reduce the risk of infections.

**Skin Care**
The regularly cleansing and washing of areas affected by incontinence can severely damage the barrier and protective function of the skin. Alkaline soaps and detergents raise the pH of the skin which damages the acid mantle, and often wash off important epidermal fats which support the barrier function and elasticity of the skin, leaving it dry and susceptible to infections.

It is very important to choose a cleanser that is specifically designed for elderly and sensitive skin. Cleansing products must ensure proper cleansing without causing dryness or irritation to the skin while being neutral to the skin at pH 5.5.

*This information on skin care proudly brought to you by HARTMANN.*