

What To Consider When Choosing an Incontinence Product

Whether you're a caregiver choosing an incontinence product for a patient or loved one or an adult with incontinence that is searching for a brand to provide comfort and mobility; picking the best disposable adult incontinence product will make a big difference in quality of life. With the right combination of medicine, planning, and hygiene products, you can maintain an active, healthy lifestyle for yourself or your loved one.

Dr. Chmielewski, the Research and Development Senior Scientist for Attends, has been in the disposable adult incontinence product industry for 44 years. He has a wealth of experience and science-based insights to help customers make the best decisions regarding their health, comfort, and dryness. He shares the primary factors to consider when choosing an incontinence product.

1. **Dignity and Discretion:** "At the end of the day," he shares, "You want to create something more garment-like. You want people to forget it's even there." If a product line feels and looks like typical underwear, it's more comfortable and feels more natural. "I can see this factor being very important to people -- incontinence is a hard thing for people to accept. If it is a condition that makes people want to withdraw and change their lifestyle. We want to do what it takes to remove the reasons people want to withdraw."

"Absorbent core technology is getting more advanced. We used to use big, fluffy materials. But now the surrounding parts are becoming elasticated. They conform better to the body. If you look at our pull-up underwear, they even print a tag in the back. Someday, we hope there'll be no way to tell the difference between incontinence products and traditional underwear."

2. **High Absorption Rate:** "These products are worn to prevent leakage. They have to absorb quickly. You'd be surprised how many companies just test their absorption by dunking their product in liquid to see how much it'll hold. But it's not just about capacity; it's about absorption rate, or functional capacity."

"Think about liquid going into a core. You need volume, space to hold the liquid. Its capillary force immediately holds up the liquid. Then you have super-absorbent polymer, but that takes time to pick it up. So if you wiped with a super-absorbent polymer, it wouldn't instantaneously hold liquid."

"If a product absorbs a lot of fluid, but doesn't absorb quickly, you'll still feel the moisture on your skin."

3. **Sound and Smell:** “Some materials are inherently noisier than others. When you combine them in a product, the way you glue them into different laminates.” A quality product won’t just focus on absorption, but also on the way the product is put together. It shouldn’t make sounds when you move; it shouldn’t let odors free.

4. **Breathable:** Aside from keeping moisture away from the skin, a good product will allow for air flow. “Do you want to work out in a sweatsuit,” asks Dr. Chmielewski. “No air flow means the water vapor coming out through your skin can’t escape. It just stays under your skin, and you become wet and clammy.”

5. **Ease of Removal:** This is a big one. Imagine a caregiver, a CNA, who has to remove dozens of these products a day; they have to remove them quickly so they can get to more residents and patients. Or, imagine a customer who uses these, who might be slightly older than 55+, who could have arthritis. A quality product will take ease-of-use into consideration.

“Incontinence is not a disease -- it’s a natural part of aging,” shares Dr. Chmielewski. “Our customers have jobs, have families, have volunteer activities. They don’t want people to hear their incontinence product crinkling in a meeting, or for people to be able to smell it.” Scientists are constantly working to make incontinence products better and better. “We always want to go thinner, make them more absorbent, more breathable. Ultimately, we all want to make them more like cloth underwear.”

“That is a dream that can happen.” After 44 years as a scientist in this industry, he says, “I really believe we’re going to be there. You’ll have a hard time telling it from real underwear.”

