



Protect your skin - How specialist skin care can turn from a luxury to a necessity for diabetes patients

The skin and its function

Our skin is a living organism and forms an excellent barrier. This barrier reduces water loss through the skin. It also stops anything getting in from outside.

The skin is a complex structure with 3 layers; the epidermis, the dermis and the hypodermis. The lowest or basal layer of the epidermis is the active, dividing layer. These cells are continually dividing and multiplying and then rise gradually to the surface. Here they undergo changes from living cells (keratinocytes) to dead cells (corneocytes) which are ultimately lost either naturally or by aggression such as detergents or exfoliation.

This continuous process of division and shedding takes about 28 days, but slows with ageing. The dead cells are surrounded by a lamellar lipid structure which is made up of layers of water and lipids. This structure forms the outer layer of the skin and is called the stratum corneum. The outer layer can be compared to a wall and is often referred to as having a bricks and mortar structure. It consists of corneocytes (bricks) which are bound to the lamellar lipid structure (mortar). This structure is essential for an effective barrier and will prevent excessive water loss (trans-epidermal water loss), as well as the penetration of irritating substances. To prevent a drop in water level and skin dehydration, water is constantly sourced from the deeper layers.

Diabetic patients lose more water through urination and usually do not drink enough which causes a lack of water which means that the skin dehydrates quickly. Dry skin is common all over the body but, in most cases it is worse on the extremities: legs, feet, knees, elbows and hands which results in a less supple and cracked skin.

Dry skin

In case of dry skin, the unique lamellar lipid structure is damaged and the function of enzymes is slowed. Therefore the stratum corneum is less structured and this weakens the barrier function of the skin. More water evaporates and irritating substances and micro-organisms can penetrate more easily. This can become a vicious circle; once the barrier is damaged, the protection lessens and irritations, allergies and infections are more common. These will weaken the barrier even more. The prevention of dry skin in diabetes patients is therefore necessary as dry cracked skin easily leads to infections which can cause serious complications.

Skin ageing

The dermis consists of proteins, collagen and elastin which form a matrix and retains moisture. The dermis gives the skin its suppleness and elasticity. Damage to dermal proteins causes the skin to age.

Collagen and elastin react with sugars to form AGEs (advanced glycation end products) which cause the loss of elasticity and a dull wrinkled skin. Because of a higher blood sugar level and a higher level of AGEs, diabetes patients often have premature skin ageing.

A specialised skincare routine with specific diabetes products can slow down this process.

Daily skincare

A healthy life style and control of blood sugar levels are the fundamental basis of diabetic care. Skin cleansing is necessary to maintain healthy skin. The goal is to remove impurities and micro-organisms without disrupting the skin's natural balance and removing the skin lipids.

Water alone is not sufficient to cleanse. Soaps can thoroughly cleanse, but have a high pH level. A change in the skin's pH level combined with cleansing can harm the skin's barrier.

Cleansing with a gentle soap-less cleanser (pH neutral), such as Naqi's Body Soap, is recommended for daily use. Gentle cleansing is necessary to prevent the dissolving of lipids and damage to the skin's barrier. The amount of foam is not a sign of intensive cleansing. In fact, the more foam, the higher the risk of irritation. After cleansing the skin must always be carefully rinsed with lukewarm water – never hot. The skin must always be carefully dried especially between the toes.

Afterwards the skin must be moisturised with a body lotion such as Naqi's Body Lotion, to keep a soft and firm which is a sign that the skin is well hydrated and the barrier is working well.

A body lotion with a natural base with ingredients such as glycerine and panthenol, is recommended.

Do not apply any moisturising products between the toes as micro-organisms easily multiply in warm and moist environments;

To intensively hydrate the skin and to slow down premature skin ageing, a product with carnosine and antioxidants such as Naqi Body Care is recommended to prevent the formation of AGEs.

How healthy is your skin?

The key factor to prevent diabetes-related skin problems is to keep diabetes under control:

There are 6 warning signs of a diminished resistance to infections

Has your skin become visibly thicker?

Has your skin become visibly drier?

Is your skin shedding?

Is your skin showing cracks?

Has your skin become yellower?

Do small wounds heal slower?

If the reply to any of these 6 questions is yes, then using specialised diabetes skin care products such as Naqi's Diabetes range and following a better skin care routine need to be your first priority to avoid further problems and complications.

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