

Gabe Q&A

Question: Where is the best place to merchandise incontinence products?

Answer: It depends.

Where is the best place in your store to merchandise the incontinence category? It depends. If you follow the popular theory from the 80s, you would place them near the diaper section. Don't do that! The diaper section may be the worse spot in your store. As recently as this past January I would have recommended that you place the category near the durable medical equipment section. After further research and reflection, I'm changing my tune. It's a good space, but not the best space.

According to a brilliant and well-informed representative from Kimberly-Clark, the manufacturer of Depends, the best place to merchandise incontinence products is... near the feminine hygiene section. She mentioned the new promotion called "[Underawareness](#)," which is aimed at consumers under the age of 50. According to a recent article in *The New York Times*, "The goal of the campaign is to reduce the stigma of the products by showing that bladder incontinence is common and affects younger people more than many people realize. It also highlights that the products look more like underwear than they did decades ago, when they resembled bulky diapers."*

The vast majority of customers who purchase this type of product, brand or generic, are women – hence placement near the feminine hygiene category. What do people look for in incontinence products? They look for the feel and fit of real underwear; a slim profile; a discreet fit; worry-free odor & leakage control; and, oddly enough, noise reduction. (It's not what you think; it means no plastic "whish" noise when walking, similar to the irritating noise made while walking with corduroys.)

Brief tips on incontinence merchandising:

- Undergarments are price-sensitive and profit margins on some brands are as low as 3.5% to 17.6%. Check your retails!
- Offer to deliver incontinence products with Rx deliveries.
- Offer a representation of a major brand and a private label.

Send me your merchandising questions for future Gabe Q&As at gabe.trahan@ncpanet.org.

-- Gabe Trahan, NCPA Senior Director of Store Operations and Marketing

* Newman, Andrew Adam. "Aiming to Reduce a Stigma, Depend's New Pitch Is 'Drop Your Pants'." *The New York Times*. July 27, 2014. Accessed at http://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/28/business/aiming-to-reduce-a-stigma-depends-new-pitch-is-drop-your-pants.html?_r=0.