

Strategies, Interventions, and Routines for the Prevention or Mitigation of Skin Picking in Individuals with Prader-Willi Syndrome

Skin picking is a common and difficult behavior in individuals with PWS, often triggered or worsened by anxiety, transitions, boredom, or skin irritation. This document provides information on strategies and interventions to help reduce the chances of or mitigate the behavior of skin picking. You will also find samples of specific sensory activities and a sample daily sensory routine, all designed for individuals with Prader-Willi syndrome.

If the skin picking becomes moderate to severe or you have concerns, please contact your loved one's specialist for guidance. Rectal picking, a common but under-discussed behavior in PWS, may be a sign of significant bowel issues and should be addressed by a doctor.

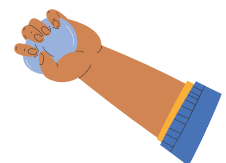
As always, if you have further questions or concerns, you may reach out to PWSA | USA at info@pwsausa.org.

Strategies and Interventions

Environmental Interventions and Strategies:

Distraction and Engagement:

- **Fidget Alternatives**
 - Provide sensory substitutes like fidget toys, textured fabrics, or stress balls to keep hands occupied.
- **Keep Skin Covered**
 - Long sleeves, leggings, compression garments, or even bandages over frequently picked areas can help reduce access.
 - Wearing light gloves (like cotton ones) at night or during high-risk times can discourage picking.
 - Restrictive clothing like one-piece outfits (e.g., bodysuits or jumpsuits) or clothing with hard-to-access zippers or snaps, may be determined to be clinically necessary in extreme situations.



Increase Structure & Engagement:

- Keeping hands engaged with crafts, puzzles, or other activities can help.
- Create a structured routine
 - Predictable daily schedules can reduce anxiety and boredom, which may trigger picking.

Monitor and Modify the Environment:

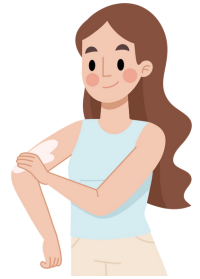
- Ensure a calm, low-stress environment as stress can exacerbate behaviors.
- Identify and minimize triggers for anxiety or sensory-seeking behavior.

Strategies and Interventions continued...



Medical & Nutritional Approaches

- Check for Underlying Skin Issues:
 - Dry skin, eczema, or even minor blemishes can trigger picking.
 - Regularly moisturizing with thick creams (like Aquaphor) can help.
- Treat Any Wounds Promptly:
 - Use liquid bandages, hydrocolloid dressings, or silicone scar sheets to cover picked areas and promote healing.
- Consider Supplements:
 - Some people find benefit from NAC (N-Acetylcysteine), an antioxidant that has been studied for compulsive behaviors, including skin picking. Check with doctor before trying.
- In the case of rectal picking:
 - Ensure bowel movements are regular, and stools are soft.
 - Check for hemorrhoids, anal fissures, or irritation. Topical treatments like barrier creams (e.g., zinc oxide) can soothe irritation and prevent further damage.
- Watch for infections:
 - Address any signs of infection, such as redness, swelling, or unusual odor, with a healthcare provider's guidance.



Psychological Support and Behavioral Interventions:

- Anxiety Management
 - Picking is often a response to stress. Techniques like deep breathing, mindfulness, or visual schedules might help.
- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)
 - If available, a specialist in PWS and compulsive behaviors can help with habit-reversal training.

Emotional Regulation Techniques

CALMING
BEDTIME
ROUTINE

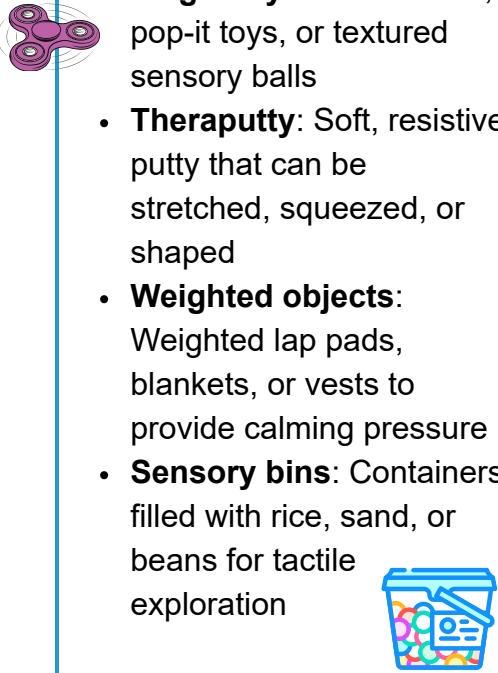
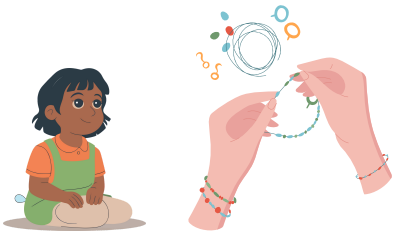
MINDFULNESS

DEEP
BREATHING
EXERCISES

GUIDED
MEDITATION

COGNITIVE
BEHAVIORAL
STRATEGIES

Specific Sensory Strategies

Tactile Sensory Toys	Deep Pressure Activities	Hand Occupation
• Fidget toys: Stress balls, pop-it toys, or textured sensory balls • Theraputty: Soft, resistive putty that can be stretched, squeezed, or shaped • Weighted objects: Weighted lap pads, blankets, or vests to provide calming pressure • Sensory bins: Containers filled with rice, sand, or beans for tactile exploration 	Offer calming sensory input through: • Weighted blankets or compression clothing • Hugs or firm back massages (if the individual is comfortable) • Body socks (stretchy, enclosed fabric for proprioceptive feedback) 	Provide tasks that involve the hands and keep them busy: • Kneading dough, shaping clay, or playing with slime. • Beading or threading activities. • Squeezing sponges or using spray bottles during water play or cleaning 
Environmental Modifications	Body Awareness and Sensory Regulation	Therapeutic Sensory Programs
Create a sensory-friendly environment to reduce the desire for picking: • Calming sensory spaces: Include dim lighting, soft music, and cozy seating to promote relaxation. • Visual distractions: Provide access to visually engaging items like lava lamps or light-up toys. • Auditory input: Noise-canceling headphones or calming soundtracks to reduce sensory overload. 	Help the individual become more attuned to their body and sensory needs: • Movement activities: Yoga, stretching, or jumping on a trampoline to provide proprioceptive feedback. • Vibration tools: Hand-held massagers or vibrating toys can satisfy sensory-seeking behaviors. 	• Occupational therapy: Work with an OT to develop a sensory diet tailored to the individual's specific needs • Weighted and compression clothing: Helps provide constant sensory input, which can reduce the drive for self-directed behaviors like rectal picking 

Sample Daily Sensory Routine

Morning Routine:

1. Deep Pressure Activities:

- Use a weighted blanket or compression vest for 10–20 minutes after waking to help calm the nervous system.
- Perform self-massage with a soft brush or massage ball on arms and legs (avoiding areas prone to picking).
- Engage in joint compressions or light yoga/stretching exercises.

2. Proprioceptive Input:

- Do heavy work activities like pushing a chair, carrying a weighted backpack (light, under supervision), or household chores like sweeping.

3. Tactile Substitution:

- Provide a sensory fidget, textured stress ball, or putty to keep hands busy during idle times.

Daytime Routine

1. Physical Activity:

- Incorporate low-impact exercises, such as walking, swimming, or resistance bands, to release energy and promote body awareness.
- Schedule movement breaks every 1–2 hours (jumping jacks, wall pushes, or a brisk walk).

2. Visual and Tactile Stimulation:

- Use calming visual aids, such as liquid motion timers or lava lamps, to focus attention during high-anxiety moments.
- Offer access to a textured sensory mat to step or press on with hands or feet.

Sample Daily Sensory Routine

Daytime Routine

3. Fine Motor Engagement:

- Provide activities like stringing beads, coloring, or using a sensory bin with rice or sand to engage hands in constructive tasks.
- Include skin-safe fidgets like soft gloves to reduce the tendency to pick.

4. Behavioral Interventions:

- Use visual schedules and timers to provide structure and predictability.
- Use a token system or reward chart for avoiding picking behaviors and practicing replacement activities.

Evening Routine

1. Relaxation and Regulation:

- Offer a warm bath with Epsom salts (if safe) for soothing tactile input.
- Use aromatherapy (e.g., lavender) and dim lighting to reduce overstimulation.

2. Mindfulness and Sensory Calming:

- Practice guided meditation or deep breathing exercises before bed.
- Engage in a calming activity like listening to soft music, weighted lap pad use, or reading tactile storybooks.