

## Skin Care

### Risk Factors for Skin Breakdown

Impaired mobility  
Nutrition or hydration deficit  
Incontinence  
Impaired blood flow  
Skin desensitized to pain or pressure  
Diseases such as Diabetes or Renal Failure  
Excessive moisture on skin  
Dementia  
Drugs like steroids that impair wound healing  
Peripheral vascular disease  
History of skin breakdown

### Causes of Pressure

Remaining too long in one position  
Friction and shearing  
Bad positioning in a chair  
Bad positioning of braces, casts, or other devices  
Ill-fitting shoes  
Contractures

### Interventions to Prevent Pressure Ulcers

Provide measures to decrease pressure/irritation to skin: fleece pad, heel protectors  
Keep skin clean and dry  
Change incontinent pad ASAP after voiding or bowel movement  
Apply protective or barrier lotion after incontinence  
Avoid hot water and irritating soaps  
Keep bed linen clean, dry, and free of wrinkles  
Assist patient to turn and reposition every two hours

Position with pads and cushions to prevent pressure

Increase out of bed activity as tolerated

### Skin Changes in the Elderly

Skin becomes less elastic, less rigid, sags and doesn't snap back as quickly, so it is more easily torn by stress.

Thin skin has less of a barrier effect – loses water more easily, bacteria can get in easier. There is less of the fat layer, so less protection.

Sensory and/or cognitive impairment, poor nutrition, anticoagulants can increase incidents of tearing and bruising.

All of the patients are at risk, but more dependent patients are at a greater risk.

80% occur on arms and hands - and legs also get a lot of skin tears.

If you find a skin tear or bruise on a patient report it to the supervisor, so they can be referred to a skilled home care agency.

**DO NOT APPLY ANY PRESCRIPTION OINTMENTS/LOTIONS OR PERFORM ANY TYPE OF WOUND CARE OR WOUND DRESSING!**

### Causes of Skin Tears

Friction or shearing - This can happen with the slightest movement

During personal care:

Turning / Transfers

Dressing

Bathing

Ambulating

Changing dressings

Rubbing and bumping against objects: bed, chair, clothing, dressings, tubing, toilet, any object

What are some ways we can help to prevent skin tears?

## Ways to Prevent Skin Tears

Good positioning, turning, transferring, and ambulating techniques

Watch out for bed rails when turning

When transferring, use enough help

Make sure all wheelchair leg rests are out of the way

Pad equipment when possible such as bed rails, chair arms

Dress patient in long sleeves or pants

Lotion to dry skin twice a day

Don't let arms or legs dangle – support them