



Skin Tear Prevention

Information for Patients, Residents and Carers

What is a skin tear?

A skin tear is an injury caused by shearing, friction or blunt trauma leading to the separation of the skin layers.

What causes skin tears?

Skin tears can result from:

- minor trauma like knocks and bumps
- falls
- removal of dressings and tape
- physical handling (showering, mobilising, dressing for example)
- equipment injuries.

Who is affected?

Skin tears affect **all ages** but are more common in:

- the very young and the elderly
- unwell individuals
- those who need help with personal care.

Am I at risk?

You are at risk of a skin tear if:

- your age is greater than 65 years
- you have dry, scaly or itchy skin
- you bruise easily

- you need help from others to move or get out of bed
- you have swollen legs
- you have trouble with your eyesight, hearing or balance
- you have a loss of feeling in your feet, hands or skin
- you have had skin tears before.

Preventing skin tears

- Ensure rooms are well lit
- Pad sharp corners on furniture
- Avoid clutter
- Clear the floor of loose objects such as floor rugs
- Be aware of your pets
- Use caution when using heating appliances
- Take care with/around sharp objects
- Always keep a first aid kit at home which includes non-adhesive dressings and gentle crepe bandages.
*Adhesive wound plasters can damage the skin when being removed.

Look after your skin

- Avoid wearing sharp jewellery
- Keep nails filed and short
- Check for skin tears regularly
- Wear long sleeves and pants to protect limbs
- Get your eyes checked regularly
- Wear glasses if needed
- If you have problems with balance, mobility or falls, see your GP or health professional
- Moisturise at least twice a day.

Cleansing your skin

When cleansing your skin follow these easy steps to help keep it healthy and supple:

- Don't shower for longer than needed; keep it brief
- Ensure the water is lukewarm; not too hot
- Use a soap free cleanser suitable for your skin
- Pat skin dry, don't rub
- Cleansing wipes are an alternative to showering.

Other brochures also available:

- Skin Tear Management
- Maintaining Healthy Skin.

Contact Information

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