

PRESSURE ULCER/INJURY RECURRENCE

PATHWAY ON SKIN CARE INDICATIONS FOR PATIENTS AND CAREGIVERS



Choose a time schedule during the day for skin inspection – It should be done lying down, ideally in bed.

Start from the toes to the upper body, use a mirror, or your mobile phone to check areas that cannot be seen easily, if not possible, ask for someone in your close relations to help you!

When removing clothes and shoes, look to see if there is any fluid or blood - this could be a sign that there is a skin injury.

If you see redness, purple-maroon or discoloured areas (compared to your normal skin colour) contact your healthcare provider urgently for advice.

If you have a dark skin tone, check for discoloured or darker areas, warm or cold compared with the surrounding skin is a red flag – contact your provider.

Dangerous areas: Tip of the toes, in between two toes, heel, ankle, Achilles tendon area, front of the shin, knee, buttocks and the area at the base of your spine.

Two ways for providing skin hygiene:

1. Using soap and water:

- Use a mild soap and lukewarm tap water, preferably with a pH of 4-5.
- Avoid excessive friction during washing.
- After bathing, apply an emollient cream to hydrate the skin.
- In the area between your genitals and anus (perineum) area, use a barrier cream for added protection.

2. Using leave-on skin cleansers:

- Use gentle, no-rinse skin cleansers that don't require water.
- Choose products with a pH of 4-5.
- Apply the product gently to the affected areas.
- There is no need to apply an emollient cream afterward.
- For the perineum area, use a barrier cream for protection.

Additional skin care recommendations:

To maintain skin integrity and prevent damage, it is important to follow a skin care regimen that includes the regular and generous use of lipophilic leave-on products.

Avoid:

- Harsh soaps, alcohol-based products and antibacterial or antimicrobial soaps.
- Powders, as they can irritate the skin.¹⁻²



The ideal time to check your skin is when you are washing and dressing!

Skin beneath the injury is more vulnerable!



Everyday life for survivors of a spinal cord injury (SCI) involves self-care routines focused on bladder management and skincare, both of which require strict adherence to a regular schedule for skin checks.

It is suggested that optimising skin integrity through the use of emollients and other skincare preparations can make the skin more resilient to friction, potentially reducing the risk of pressure ulcers.

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General recommendations for skin care in individuals with SCI

- Avoid soaps labeled "antibacterial" or "antimicrobial." These tend to reduce the skin's acidity, which acts as a protection from infection.
- Keep the skin clean and dry. Wash with soap and water daily, then rinse and dry thoroughly.
- Skin folds or creases (as in the groin area and underarms) need washing more frequently - twice a day, morning and bedtime. Rashes can easily form in these areas because of increased moisture and warmth. Increasing the air circulation to these areas to help prevent rashes can be accomplished by positioning the arms and legs so the skin surfaces are separated. For example, use the "frog" position to air the groin area. Air these areas two times a day.
- Rashes can be caused by tapes, soaps, fabrics or other irritants. Total body rashes may result from food or drug allergies. Consult your health care provider for treatment of these and any other rashes you may have.
- Avoid using items that may dry the skin - for example, harsh soaps or alcohol-based products such as lotions.
- Lubricate dry skin with moisturizing creams or ointments. Use care in applying creams over bony areas, since they may soften the skin and promote skin breakdown.
- Soiled skin can break down easily. Urine and stool have irritants in them and should be cleaned up immediately to prevent weakening and breakdown of the skin surface.
- Avoid using talc powders, as they may support yeast growth. They can also "cake up" and keep moisture in, causing skin breakdown.
- Calluses may form on your feet and hands. These can be removed by soaking frequently in warm water and toweling briskly to remove dead skin. You can use moisturizing creams to help soften calluses. Note that calluses may indicate an area of excess friction or pressure.
- Finger and toenails require special care. Soak them and rub gently with a towel to remove dead skin and decrease the chance of hangnails forming. Nails are easier to cut after soaking; be sure to cut them straight across to avoid ingrown nails and keep them short for safety. If ingrown nails develop, see your primary care provider or podiatrist.

Source: https://sci.washington.edu/info/pamphlets/skin_1.asp

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References

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