

What to do for a skin tear

- Wash your hands
- Control bleeding, then gently clean the wound with warm clean water
- Air or pat dry with a clean towel
- If a skin flap is still attached, try to replace it by gently rolling the skin back over the wound, do not cut the skin flap off
- Cover the wound with a clean, non-stick dressing
- Use a stockinette instead of adhesive dressings or tapes
- Contact your health professional



This is a guide only and does not replace clinical judgment

References:

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Skin Tears

Information for clients, family and carers



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Skin Tears

What is a skin tear?

- A skin tear is a break in the outer layers of the skin
- It can result in the 'peeling back' of the skin, or partial or total loss of the skin



How do skin tears occur?

Most skin tears occur because of:

- falls, accidents, knocks and bumps
- removal of tapes and adhesives

Skin tears are a common problem affecting older people

Risk factors for skin tears

You are at risk for a skin tear if you:

- have fragile dry flaking skin
- have memory or sensory impairment
- have poor mobility
- have poor nutrition and hydration
- are taking multiple medications

How to prevent skin tears

✓ Do

- Drink six to eight glasses of fluid daily
- Eat a balanced, nutritious diet
- Keep fingernails and toenails trimmed
- Apply moisturiser twice daily
- Wear long sleeves, long pants or knee-high socks to protect skin
- Ensure adequate lighting and remove obstacles

✗ Don't

- Do not use tapes or adhesives
- Do not use soap for bathing—try liquid body wash for cleansing

How carers can help prevent skin tears



✓ Do

- Use correct lifting, positioning and transfer techniques
- Use caution when bathing and dressing
- Keep fingernails trimmed
- Protect fragile skin e.g. use limb protectors or long sleeves or pants
- Pad or cushion equipment and furniture e.g. wheelchairs
- Use pillows (satin or silk covers help reduce friction and shear) to position people who are less mobile
- Provide a well-lit, safe environment

✗ Don't

- Do not wear rings or watches that may snag skin
- Do not pull the skin during contact. Use assistive devices e.g. slide sheets.
- Do not use tapes or adhesives