

Skin Tear Management Flow Chart

Assessment

- All clients should have a risk assessment for skin tears on admission or change in condition
- Assess and document skin tears using a recognised assessment and classification system e.g. STAR¹ or ISTAP²
- Assess cause of any skin tear, pain, the wound characteristics, and surrounding skin for swelling, discolouration or bruising

If skin flap is pale, dusky or darkened:

- reassess in 24-48 hours or at the first dressing change

Assessment should only be undertaken by trained staff

¹ Carville et al. 2007 ² LaBlanc et al. 2013

Management

- Control bleeding and pain
- Cleanse the wound gently with warm water or normal saline, pat dry
- Realign edges if possible
 - do not stretch the skin
 - use a moist cotton-tip to roll skin into place
- Apply a low adherent, flexible dressing to wound, overlapping the wound by at least two cm
- Draw arrows on the dressing to indicate the direction of dressing removal
- Mark the date on the dressing
- Avoid use of adhesive dressings or tape, film or hydrocolloid dressings, skin closure strips or gauze

Prevention

- Assess skin regularly and implement a prevention protocol for those at risk
- Use soap-free bathing products
- Apply moisturiser twice daily
- Use correct lifting and positioning techniques
- Protect fragile skin with either limb protectors or long sleeves or pants
- Pad or cushion equipment and furniture
- Avoid using tapes or adhesives, use tubular retention bandages to secure dressings
- Minimise falls risk (e.g. good lighting)
- Maintain optimal nutrition and hydration status

Document

- Level of risk and risk factors present
- Prevention strategies
- Management strategies
- Category of skin tear/s, size, location, tissue type, exudate, surrounding skin
- Progress and outcome of interventions

Risk factors for a skin tear

History of previous skin tears

Bruising, haematoma, oedema, skin changes related to aging or critical illness

Fragile, dry flaking skin with poor elasticity

Cognitive impairment/dementia

Impaired sensory perception

Dependency with repositioning

Multiple medications

Impaired mobility or history of falls

Poor nutritional status and/or dehydration



References:

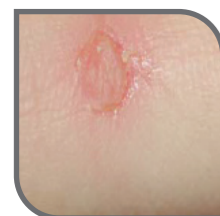
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woundresearch@qut.edu.au www.qut.edu.au/ihbi

CRICOS No. 00213J

STAR classification system



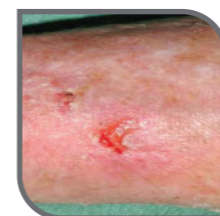
Category 1a

A skin tear where the edges can be realigned to the normal anatomical position (without undue stretching) and the skin or flap colour **is not** pale, dusky or darkened.



Category 1b

A skin tear where the edges can be realigned to the normal anatomical position (without undue stretching) and the skin or flap colour **is** pale, dusky or darkened.



Category 2a

A skin tear where the edges can not be realigned to the normal anatomical position and the skin or flap colour **is not** pale, dusky or darkened.



Category 2b

A skin tear where the edges can not be realigned to the normal anatomical position and the skin or flap colour **is** pale, dusky or darkened.



Category 3

A skin tear where the skin flap is completely absent.