

What to do for a skin tear

- Wash your hands
- Control bleeding, then gently clean the wound with clean water
- Air dry 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 dressing or tape
- Contact your health professional



This is a guide only and does not replace clinical judgment

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Skin Tears

Information for people, family and carers



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
- some medications

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
- are prone to bruising
- have memory or sensory impairment
- have poor mobility
- have poor nutrition and hydration
- are taking multiple medications

How to prevent skin tears

Do

- ✓ Eat a healthy diet
- ✓ Drink fluids to stay hydrated
- ✓ Keep fingernails and toenails trimmed
- ✓ Wear long sleeves, long pants or knee-high socks to protect skin
- ✓ Moisturise dry skin twice daily
- ✓ Ensure adequate lighting and remove obstacles

Don't

- ✗ Do not use tapes or adhesives
- ✗ Do not use soap for bathing. Try liquid body wash or cleansers

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
- ✓ Provide a well-lit, safe environment

Don't

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