



## Tips for Careworkers: Skin and Wound Care

**What it is:** Wounds are damage or breaks of the skin and are common at the end of life. Wounds include:

- pressure ulcers
- ischemic wounds
- skin tears
- skin changes.

**Why it matters:** The skin is an organ. The skin deteriorates with advanced disease. As the body weakens with age, severe illness, or multiple illnesses, wounds can become more common. Wounds affect a person's quality of life due to:

- pain
- unpleasant smell
- putrid or bad smelling discharge
- disturbed sleep
- the time it takes to look after a wound.

A person with a wound or skin changes may feel embarrassed. They may not want to be around other people.

Wounds can be worsened by:

- poor handling technique
- rushing the person during care
- poor hygiene
- inadequate wound care.

**What I need to know:** Despite good wound care, wounds may not heal. However, wound care should be continued to prevent more damage.

### Note

Remember that the person will be more comfortable if they have regular pain medication and if they are given analgesics before starting wound care.

### Do

Report to nursing staff:

- pain during wound care or when moving
- skin changes - redness, dryness, itchiness
- skin tears or ulcers
- smell
- oozing or bleeding
- any worsening of a known wound.

### Do

Follow hand hygiene steps so that your hands are always clean.

### Do

Protect the person from injury by:

- careful positioning to avoid friction and shearing forces, bumps and scratches
- avoiding vigorous skin rubbing
- appropriate continence care
- cleaning skin with gentle skin cleanser and thoroughly drying
- protecting skin with water based skin moisturiser
- using pressure relieving devices.

**Name:**

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## My reflections:

What changes in the skin should I report to nursing/supervisory staff?

Skin deteriorates with advanced diseases. What approaches to care can be taken to avoid skin damage and wounds at the end of life?

## My notes:

See related palliAGED Practice  
Tip Sheets:  
Cachexia, Sarcopenia  
and Anorexia  
Frailty  
Pain Management

For references and the latest version of all Tip Sheets visit  
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