

# Skin Disorders and Prevention

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The skin is the largest organ in the human body and has many functions. There are many skin disorders and while many cannot be prevented, it is important to know what can be prevented, and how to protect it.

## WHAT DOES THE SKIN DO?

- Maintains fluid in the body
- Protects the body from infection and injury
- Feels/senses (temperature, pain, textures)
- Regulates body temperature
- Turns sun exposure into Vitamin D

## COMMON SKIN DISORDERS

- Dermatitis and other rashes
- Cellulitis
- Shingles
- Pressure injuries
- Skin cancer

## PREVENTION

- ✓ Clean your skin and apply gentle lotion daily, wear sunscreen outdoors
- ✓ Avoid contact with irritants or chemicals and wash your hands often
- ✓ Disinfect objects like phones, remotes, and other high-touch items
- ✓ Stay hydrated, reduce sugar and avoid processed foods
- ✓ Change positions frequently to reduce pressure
- ✓ Get a shingles vaccine



## CAUSES AND RISK FACTORS

- Bacteria in the pores
- Ultraviolet (UV) light exposure
- Chronic disease like diabetes, hormonal or autoimmune disease
- Medications that affect the skin
- Environmental triggers like allergens, irritants or stress
- Genetics or family history

## SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- Rashes or patches
- Dry or scaly skin
- Open sores or ulcers
- Lesions or pustules
- Change in skin color
- Itchiness or pain

## REDUCE YOUR SKIN CANCER RISK

Skin cancer is a disease where cells in the skin grow out of control and incorrectly. It is the most common cancer in the United States. 1/5 people develop skin cancer in their life.

### TYPES OF SKIN CANCER

- ❖ Basal cell carcinoma - the most common type of skin cancer. Appears as a shiny pink sore.
- ❖ Squamous cell carcinoma - the second most common type of skin cancer. Appears as a scaly red patch, bump or open sore.
- ❖ Melanoma - the highest risk for death from skin cancer. Appears as a dark colored area.
- ❖ Other less common skin cancers

### CAUSES AND RISK FACTORS


- ❖ Ultraviolet (UV) light from sun, tanning beds or sunlamps
- ❖ Family history of skin cancer
- ❖ Other skin conditions
- ❖ High number of freckles or moles
- ❖ Lighter skin, hair, or eyes
- ❖ Having five or more sunburns, especially with blistering

### SIGNS TO WATCH FOR:

- ❖ Changes in skin or moles, a new area, or a sore that isn't healing
- ❖ Pearly area on the face or neck
- ❖ Pink, red or brown area that may look like a scar
- ❖ Crusty areas that may itch or bleed
- ❖ ABCDE's of Melanoma-
  - **A**symmetrical-uneven shape
  - **B**order-jagged edges
  - **C**olor-variety or changing color
  - **D**iameter-larger than a pea
  - **E**volving-changing over time

### PREVENTION

- ✓ Avoid too much sunlight and stay in the shade
- ✓ Avoid tanning beds
- ✓ Wear sunscreen with SPF 30 or higher
- ✓ Wear sunglasses, hats, and protective clothing
- ✓ Check your entire skin every month for changes

 Notify your healthcare provider of any of these changes, especially changes in moles. Most skin cancers can be cured if treated early.

# PRESSURE INJURY PREVENTION

Pressure injuries occur when the skin is pressed between a bone and a surface causing blood flow to be restricted and skin to be damaged. The most common areas affected are the tailbone, heels, hips or buttocks.

## RISK FACTORS


- Spending most of the time in bed or a chair
- Reduced ability to feel the skin
- Poor nutrition or hydration
- Diabetes or poor circulation
- Smoking or second-hand smoke
- Moisture, especially loss of bladder or bowel control

## SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- Redness that doesn't fade or doesn't turn white when touched
- Purple, blue, brown, or black discolorations
- Open sores or blisters
- Pain or discomfort in the skin

## PREVENTION

- ✓ Change positions at least every 2 hours, every 15 minutes in a wheelchair
- ✓ Use a turn and repositioning schedule, if needed
- ✓ Check your skin daily
- ✓ Clean skin with gentle soap and water daily, apply lotion and barrier creams
- ✓ Keep skin free of moisture from sweating or bowel or bladder incontinence
- ✓ Avoid your arms and legs overlapping in bed, keep pillows in between, if needed
- ✓ Raise your heels off the bed with pillows, if pressure is a risk

 Keep any open wounds clean and covered and change when soiled or wet. Notify a healthcare provider immediately for open wounds and any signs of infection - increased pain, swelling, redness, warmth, odor, thick drainage or fever.

# SKIN CARE ROUTINE

## Daily

- Bathe/shower skin and apply gentle moisturizing lotion
- Complete any skin or wound care for active skin conditions
- Wear clean clothing
- Use a new washcloth
- Wear sunscreen and protective clothing when outside
- Stay hydrated, avoid excessive salt, sugar and processed foods
- Avoid smoking and alcohol
- Change positions frequently, at least every 1-2 hours
- Be active to improve circulation and decrease stress levels
- Get at least 7 hours of sleep

## Weekly

- Trim fingernails and avoid scratching your skin
- Wash your hair, more frequently, as desired
- Wash your clothing, towels, bed sheets, and pillows
- Clean your phone, remotes, and items you touch a lot

## Monthly

- Check your entire skin on the first day of the month
- Notify a healthcare provider with any skin changes
- Replace your bath sponges and loofahs

## Yearly

- Have a health care provider or dermatologist check your skin
- See a foot doctor for any concerns with your feet
- Stay up to date on routine health check-ups and vaccinations

