

The skin is the largest organ in the body and the first line of defense against infection. Alterations in skin integrity puts patients/residents at risk for infection.

- Skin infections can be caused by bacteria, fungi, viruses, or parasites.
- Skin infections occur when there is a change in skin integrity or when a break in the skin allows these organisms to enter the body.
- Skin infections can occur anywhere on the body including the scalp, perineal area, abdominal folds, feet, and bony areas.

### SKIN TEARS AND PRESSURE INJURIES

**Skin Tear** - a wound sustained from friction, shear, or blunt force. Skin tears result in the top layer of skin separating from the second layer. This break in the skin provides an opportunity for germs to enter the body.

**Pressure Injury** - a local injury to the skin or underlying tissue, due to constant pressure on a bony area.

**Individuals with skin tears or pressure injuries require extra care to prevent skin infection.**

- **Wound** - any skin opening that requires a dressing.

This material was prepared by Health Quality Innovators (HQI), a Quality Innovation Network-Quality Improvement Organization (QIN-QIO) under contract with the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Views expressed in this material do not necessarily reflect the official views or policy of CMS or HHS, and any reference to a specific product or entity herein does not constitute endorsement of that product or entity by CMS or HHS. 1250W/HQI/QIN-QIO-0440-02/23/23

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## SKIN CARE FOR INFECTION PREVENTION

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## SKIN CARE TIPS

- Observe the skin daily, looking for pressure injuries or skin breakdown.
- Keep skin surrounding wounds clean and dry.
- Ensure areas under abdominal folds that are prone to moisture are kept clean and dry. Do not rub dry, instead pat dry to prevent skin breakdown.
- Incontinence can lead to skin damage and infection. Remove soiled clothing promptly.
- Apply barrier cream to the perineal area, as needed. Barrier cream protects the skin from stool and urine which can irritate the skin and cause skin breakdown.
- Maintain hydration to avoid dry skin which can lead to scratching. Carefully file fingernails and toenails, as appropriate, to reduce scratches.
- Reposition patients/residents to avoid pressure. If residents are unable to get out of bed, assist them to reposition frequently.
- Encourage mobility, if applicable, and avoid long periods of sitting.
- Minimize the number of cloth layers (e.g., draw sheets, extra sheets) under residents to avoid excess pressure and skin breakdown.
- Avoid adhesives on the skin as they may cause skin breakdown when removed.
- Pad bony parts of the body from hard surfaces with appropriate support surfaces (e.g., foam wedge, pillow, cushion). Ensure supportive devices are kept clean and dry.
- Monitor patient/resident environment for safety hazards to prevent accidental bumps/scrapes/falls (e.g., sharp surfaces, scatter rugs, pets, etc.).



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