

# PATIENT/FAMILY TEACHING SHEETS



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## **Skin Care**

Care of the skin is an important part of the overall care of a sick patient. The skin is the largest organ of the body. It is the immune system's first line of defense against infection.

### **HOW CAN I KEEP THE SKIN HEALTHY?**

- Healthy skin needs to be clean and well hydrated
- Wash with warm water and mild soap
- Avoid friction or rubbing
- Clean skin after each soiling
- Use alcohol-free lotions on dry skin for moisturizing
- Do not massage reddened areas

### **WHAT CAN BE DONE TO PREVENT DAMAGE TO THE SKIN?**

- Get patient out of bed as tolerated
- Avoid having patient sit up straight in the bed any longer than necessary
- Keep heels off bed with pillows under calves
- Change bed patient's position at least every two hours; one hour if in a chair

- Have patients shift their own weight, if possible, every 15 minutes
- Ask your team to show you how to use “draw” or “pull” sheets to move the person, avoiding friction from sheets
- Cornstarch may reduce injury due to friction
- Keep patient clean and dry as much as possible

## WHAT TO REPORT TO THE CARE TEAM

- Reddened areas that do not fade
- Open areas or blisters on the skin
- Any changes in the ability to turn or change the patient’s position

The team can advise you on special pads and mattress overlays to help prevent skin breakdown. Nutrition is important in skin care but sometimes even normal amounts of food may overwhelm sick people. Offer protein-rich drinks and snacks during the day if the patient tolerates.

Even though attentive care is provided to the patient, the skin can breakdown because of the physical changes that occur at the end of life. Skin breakdown can result from lying in bed much of the time and other medical issues may prevent or delay healing.

The patients comfort is the goal of care.

Other HPNA Patient Teaching Sheets are available at [www.hpna.org](http://www.hpna.org)

### References

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