



SKIN CARE

Keeping a patient's skin both clean and intact is very important for hospice patients. Good skin care reduces discomfort, prevents pressure ulcers, and manages odor and drainage. It also helps the patient remain as active and dignified as possible.

How Skin Care Impacts Quality of Life:

A good skin care plan includes:

- Attention to the patient's and family's dignity and values about quality of life
- Preventing infection
- Preventing skin breakdown
- Clear instructions for wound care

Pressure Ulcers:

A pressure ulcer (or bedsore) is caused by constant pressure on the skin when a patient does not shift and move as often as a healthy person. The areas of the body most at risk of developing pressure ulcers are called pressure points. They include the tailbone, elbows, knees, heels, head and buttocks. Pressure ulcers can be painful and difficult to treat. Many things contribute to the development of pressure ulcers:

- The patient may not be able to feel certain parts of their body.
- Infrequent repositioning or friction against bed sheets.
- Poor nutrition or inadequate food and fluids

It is better to prevent pressure ulcers than to treat them.

How You Can Help:

- Check the skin for signs of redness or breakdown, particularly when bathing or changing clothes. *Always tell your Care Team about any new signs of skin breakdown and follow care instructions.*
- If the patient reports pain, burning, numbness or tingling of the skin, pay attention and alert your Care Team.
- Change absorbing pads often, making sure to keep the skin dry and clean.
- Use warm water (not too hot or too cold) and limit the use of mild soaps and ointments.
- Do not allow the patient to sit or lie directly on a pressure ulcer: Never massage pressure points or irritated skin.
- Ask the patient to wiggle toes and move arms and legs often to keep circulation moving. Help them to reposition often.



SKIN CARE

- Encourage the patient to range of motion exercises if it doesn't cause discomfort or injury.
- Never use a heat lamp.
- Notify your Care Team if braces or splints rub against the skin, or if oxygen tubing is rubbing against the patient's ears or cause irritation.
- Dress patient in loose fitting cotton clothing
- Keep bed linens clean, and smooth them to remove wrinkles.
- Don't use plastic sheets. They can cause skin to break down.
- Remove the bedpan soon after use to avoid pressure on the tailbone.
- Check with your Care Team to learn about methods to control odors.

Need more information or help? Call 633-3400 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to get live help. Thank you for letting us help care for you and your loved ones.