

Lesson 55: Applying a Dressing to a Minor Skin Tear

- I.
 - A. Skin tears can be prevented through decreasing or eliminating external injury hazards and taking caution when transferring and repositioning a resident.
 - B. Skin tears can be eliminated through reduction of shearing or friction:
 - 1. Keep the head of the bed raised less than 30 degrees unless contraindicated.
 - 2. Support the feet and legs whenever the head of the bed is elevated.
 - 3. Always flatten the bed before repositioning.
 - 4. When moving a resident, use lifting devices such as draw sheets, transport boards, gait belts and mechanical lifts. Do not drag the resident when repositioning.
 - 5. To decrease the potential for a resident to obtain a skin tear, ensure the resident is receiving adequate hydration and nutrition.
 - C. If a layer of skin is torn but still attached, replace the skin over the wound. Cover as much of the original surface as possible.
 - D. A viable flap may not cover the entire wound, but should be positioned so as to increase the chance for it to “take” in the wound bed.
 - E. When removing any existing dressing to evaluate the wound, be careful not to disrupt healing or damage the intact skin surrounding the wound. Take special precautions not to disturb any skin flap.
 - F. Specific wound conditions may require other types of dressings dependent upon whether the wound has moderate to heavy drainage.
- II. Ensuring the Right Dressing is being Used for the Wound
 - A. For a skin tear that has no drainage and the skin has relatively good integrity, a transparent film dressing is often applied.
 - 1. Transparent films promote healing and ensure that the skin has a moist environment.
 - 2. Another benefit of a transparent film dressing is that it allows the wound to be visualized and monitored for healing without removing the dressing.
 - 3. Transparent films do not absorb, and are NOT APPROPRIATE for draining wounds.
 - B. A skin tear that has moderate drainage may require a non-occlusive dressing.
 - 1. When a clean dressing is applied, secure the dressing with a gauze bandage roll for protection.
 - C. Skin tears with heavy drainage require an absorbent dressing to wick the drainage and cushion the wound.
 - 1. A gauze bandage roll will hold the dressing in place if the wound is on an extremity.
 - 2. Gentle adhesive tape can be used for larger body areas.
- III. Physician’s Orders
 - A. The affected area is described to the physician by the licensed nurse and an order is received for the type of dressing to be utilized. The QMA must report to the licensed nurse any change in appearance or drainage of the skin tear that might indicate a different type of dressing is warranted. The order may include cleansing of the wound prior to re-application of a dressing. Commonly, this may include cleansing the area with normal saline and gently wiping with a gauze square. The QMA must carefully read the order and inquire of the licensed nurse if uncertain of procedure.

IV. Application and Removal of Transparent Films

Transparent films vary in thickness and size. They are waterproof and impermeable to bacteria and contaminants. These dressings maintain a moist environment, promoting granulation of tissue and are the common treatment ordered for skin tears.

- A. Application
 - 1. Label the dressing with the date, time and your initials.
 - 2. Remove the dressing’s backing paper and expose the adhesive surface.
 - 3. Place the dressing gently over the wound, allowing the film to also cover approximately one inch of undamaged skin around the wound.

