



8: YOUR SKIN CARE PLAN

www.woundaware.org

In factsheet 7, we looked at the skin's crucial role in protecting and supporting the body. Caring for this valuable organ is a lifelong activity that will help you prevent chronic wounds from developing. Sun protection, hydration and moisturisation are key.

Sun protection

Sun damage ages the skin and degrades elastin and collagen levels, weakening the skin. Always cover up: don't forget your hat, loose-fitting clothes, sunglasses and SPF30+ broad-spectrum sunscreen whenever you go into the sun.

Hydration

The skin is made up of around 85% water and it's important to keep it hydrated. Drinking non-alcoholic, non-caffeinated fluids like water will prevent skin from drying out and maintain the best environment for wound healing.

Managing dry skin

Dry skin is fragile and more susceptible to cuts and grazes. Dryness is particularly common during cold or dry weather or in low humidity, and can be aggravated by perfumed soaps, chlorinated swimming pools and too long or hot showers. If dry skin is a problem for you, try soaps and shampoos that are 'neutral' and pH-balanced. Check their labels for this information.

Regular moisturising will also help. Apply to arms or legs using downward strokes to avoid forcing moisturiser into hair follicles, as this can cause inflammation known as folliculitis.



THE WOUND WARNING SIGNS

- ✓ Hot and painful
- ✓ Smells bad
- ✓ Oozing thick yellow liquid
- ✓ 30+ days to heal



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Consumer education about chronic wounds by experts at the national peak body, Wounds Australia. Find more factsheets for consumers on our website.



YOUR SKIN CARE PLAN

Continued...

Caring for the feet

The skin of the heels is particularly vulnerable to drying out, cracking or splitting. These wounds can be painful and lead to infection because it's easy area for bacteria to access.

Pressure – from shoes that are too tight, or from spending too long standing or laying down – can cause heel injuries. Moisturise your heels regularly to protect against dry and hardened skin and to increase the skin's ability to resist pressure. Look for a heel balm containing 25% urea, an effective moisturising and softening agent, to keep the skin supple.

If you have difficulty reaching your feet, use a small mirror on the floor or attached to a stick to check the soles of your feet for cuts, blisters or other wounds. Read more about foot care, especially for diabetics, in factsheet 10.



In factsheet 9, we look at the link between diabetes and chronic wounds.



ADVICE AND SUPPORT

Good sources of advice about wounds include:

- Wound care clinicians
- GPs
- Nurses
- Pharmacists
- Podiatrists
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workers
- Diabetes educators
- Some allied health professionals such as dietitians, occupational therapists and physiotherapists.



Find out more about healthcare professionals working with wounds in factsheet 6 on our website.

Care professional? Join Wounds Australia for events, guidelines, discounts and more:
woundsaustralia.org