

Skin care for a child with limited mobility

Why is skin care important?

Pressure injuries can happen if your child is immobilized (unable to move freely) for any reason.

- Too much pressure on the skin for too long can cause pressure injuries. Pressure causes a loss of blood flow to the area, which can cause part of the skin to die.
- Proper skin care and pressure relief (position changes) can help prevent pressure injuries.

Where do pressure injuries happen?

Pressure injuries:

- Can happen on any area of the body.
- Can happen under medical devices, such as splints, casts, lines or drains.
- Are more likely to cause problems on bony areas of the body. This includes:
 - Skull and ears
 - Shoulders and shoulder blades
 - Elbows
 - Hips
 - Lower back and tailbone
 - Knees
 - Shins, ankles and heels

What are the possible symptoms?

Your child may have 1 or more of these:

- Skin redness that does not go away within 30 minutes after pressure is removed
- Change in skin color or temperature (warmer or cooler than other areas nearby)
- Skin irritation, such as a break in the skin, sores or blisters

How can help I decrease the risk of pressure injuries?

Your child's doctor will talk with you about specific care for your child. Some guidelines to decrease the risk of pressure injuries are included on the following pages.

Skin care	• Check your child's skin 2 times each day or with dressing and undressing. – Check for any signs of irritation, such as: ▪ Redness ▪ Sores ▪ Blisters ▪ Rashes ▪ Swelling
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In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.

Skin care for a child with limited mobility, continued

	▪ Bruises ▪ Dry skin – Look very carefully, especially over bony areas and in creases and folds. – If your child is old enough, they may be able to check their skin using a long handled mirror. • Keep your child's skin clean and dry. • To help prevent dry skin: – Use creams and lotions. – Avoid using “antibacterial” soaps and powders unless advised by the doctor. • Be sure to: – Have your child avoid tight-fitting clothes and rough fabrics. – Wash new jeans before your child wears them. – Help make sure zippers, buttons and snaps do not rub against your child's skin. • Keep bed linens clean and dry. Watch out for wrinkles, crumbs, small toys and medical devices that can cause pressure on the skin. • Protect your child's feet with socks and shoes. Make sure shoes are not too small or tight. • Keep toenails clipped short and straight to avoid ingrown nails. • If your child uses a wheelchair, have it checked after they have surgeries on the muscles or bones. The wheelchair may need to be adjusted.
Movement	• Your child should move often. – Have them move and shift their weight at least every 15 to 30 minutes when sitting. – When resting in bed, have them turn and move at least every 2 hours. – Make sure they move at least every 4 hours (or as advised by the doctor) while sleeping. – If your child is unable to move themselves, use this same schedule to move and turn them. • If your child uses a wheelchair: – Your child should shift their weight in a wheelchair at least every 15 to 30 minutes. They can: ▪ Push their body up with their arms and hold it up for at least 15 seconds. ▪ Shift their weight from side to side, lean forward or recline in the chair to relieve pressure. – Use a proper fitting wheelchair and cushion.

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Skin care for a child with limited mobility, continued

	• While your child is in bed: – Use pillows or sheepskin to help pad bony areas and keep their body in a good position. – Position them with their heels off the mattress. • Have your child avoid sitting on the toilet for longer than 15 minutes at a time. • Teach them to use good posture when sitting to avoid pressure on the tailbone. • When you move or transfer your child: – Avoid friction and bumps to their legs or feet. – If using a transfer board, make sure your child is dressed or powder the board to avoid friction and burns.
Other help	• Give your child a healthy diet and plenty of fluids as advised by the doctor. Good nutrition helps keep skin healthy. • Teens should avoid smoking and drinking alcohol. These can decrease blood flow to the skin and cause a greater chance of skin problems.

What if my child has a loss of sensation (feeling) in part of their body?

There is an even greater chance for skin problems if your child has a loss of feeling in part of their body. Follow these extra safety guidelines:

- Be careful with hot liquids.
 - Never let your child carry hot liquids in their lap.
 - Test bath water before they get in.
- Avoid using heating pads, electric blankets or other types of heat on parts of the body that have less feeling.
- On hot days:
 - Cover hot car seats with blankets or cushions.
 - Do not put objects, like a notebook or purse, between your child's skin and the car seat.
 - Cover your child's skin with clothing, and use sunscreen when outside.
 - Try to keep your child from getting too hot to avoid sweating.
- On cold days:
 - Dress your child warmly.
 - Have them avoid staying outside too long to help prevent frostbite.

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Skin care for a child with limited mobility, continued

When should I call the doctor?

Call your child's doctor **right away** if you:

- See any skin redness or color changes that do not go away within 30 minutes after pressure is removed.
- See signs of skin irritation, such as:
 - Sores
 - Blisters
 - Rashes
 - Swelling
 - Bruises
- Have any questions or concerns about your child's skin.

This teaching sheet contains general information only. Talk with your child's doctor or a member of your child's healthcare team about specific care of your child.

In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.