

First Dressing Scheme For Skin Tears

In Residential Care Homes

SHROPSHIRE PILOT Stage 3 April 2018 – July 2018

Guidance document

Medicines Management (Care Home) Team, Shropshire CCG

Introduction

Prevention of skin tears is an important factor in the care of the elderly population. It is recognised that because of the fragility of the skin in the older person, skin tears will occur on occasion.

The process in a residential care home (personal care only) is that a District Nurse (DN) will be called on to assess and dress residents' wounds. The geographical area of Shropshire and the likelihood of a tear occurring out of hours means that an initial dressing may be applied by care staff. It is common practice for care homes keep a supply of first-aid dressings; however the products used in these supplies are not standardised.

By providing education and utilising the skills and expertise of care staff, the First Dressing Scheme for Skin Tears has been developed with an aim of ensuring the timely and appropriate application of wound dressings for residents*.

The benefits of the scheme include:

- Prompt wound management for skin tears
- Correct and appropriate use of dressings
- Utilisation of trained care staff
- Staff development and acknowledgment
- Avoiding the need for a DN to attend the home to complete the wound management on every occasion, therefore reducing the volume of calls and visits for DNs

***The First Dressing Scheme for Skin Tears is only permitted for the use of skin tears and for the initial dressing application. Subsequent dressing changes should still be carried out by the District Nursing team where necessary.**

Shropshire CCG medicines management care home team have sourced a training programme for the application of appropriate dressings and a protocol which will be available to homes wishing to take part in the scheme.

Care homes wishing to develop alternative protocols must ensure that staff have received training in the appropriate application of dressings and that the associated protocol is robust.

Skin Tear Prevention

Skin tears can occur on any part of the body but are often sustained on the extremities (particularly in elderly patients), such as upper and lower limbs or the dorsal aspect of the hands.

Some of the ways to prevent a skin tear occurring are:

- Using correct equipment to turn or move and prevention of knocks on furniture
- Wearing comfortable, supporting shoes (to help prevent trips or falls)
- Keeping skin moist using an emollient and gently patting skin dry rather than rubbing
- Keep finger and toe nails short
- Wearing clothing that covers as much as possible and that is easy to put on and remove

See [skin tear protocol](#) for further prevention tips.

First Dressing Scheme - For Skin Tears

If it is noted from past history that a resident is prone to skin tears there should be a specific management strategy in their care plan including prevention methods specific to that person.

Staff Training & Education

A training programme and [skin tear protocol](#) is offered to homes taking part in the scheme. It will be the responsibility of the care home to ensure staff are trained and assessed as competent prior to applying dressings.

A record of staff trained as part of the scheme should be retained by the manager.

Care Home Responsibilities

The Care Home Manager should:

- Assure themselves that the care staff included in the scheme are trained and competent to carry out the task of dressing application.
- Ensure that an up to date record is kept of all care staff authorised to apply first dressings i.e. those who have received training and are competent to complete the task. A record of this can be made using **Appendix A**.
- Be confident that care staff understand when to refer to a health care professional for advice.
- Ensure that all relevant paperwork is completed fully and accurately.
- Ensure that staff competency assessments are undertaken regularly and least annually.
- Ensure that a supply of appropriate dressings is made available.

Care Staff should:

- Ensure that they do not exceed their competencies.
- Be comfortable and confident to carry out the task of dressing application for skin tears only under the scheme before agreeing to take part.
- Be confident that they understand when to refer to a health care professional for advice.
- Complete all relevant paperwork promptly and accurately.
- Ensure that a follow up visit is arranged with the District Nursing team and that the visit takes place in a timely manner.
- Notify the manager (or other appointed person) if dressing supplies are getting low.

Dressing stock

Although the training and protocol are provided as part of the scheme, care homes are encouraged to purchase a small supply of dressings to be used as part of the scheme. The scheme aims to provide guidance as to which dressing would be appropriate therefore reducing the likelihood of inappropriate dressings such as adhesive plasters. Dressings can be purchased from a community pharmacy and on page three of the [skin tear Protocol](#) there is a list of suggested dressings**, including their recommended retail price and an ordering code, which will be useful for the supplying pharmacy. The dressings are only intended for use by care home staff as District Nursing teams will have their own supply.

****Please note that alternative dressings can be used for the scheme however we advise that a robust protocol is developed and care staff are trained to use the dressings appropriately.**

Storage

All dressings should be stored in a clearly marked, sealable container and kept within the clinic room with only dressings intended as part of the scheme stored in this container. It is recommended that a lidded container is used for this purpose and the skin tear protocol and other associated paperwork e.g. the purchase and return (audit) book/paperwork may also be stored in the container.

Auditing

An audit trail, including stock balance should be kept of all First Dressing Scheme for Skin Tears dressings to ensure sufficient supply. **Appendix B** may be used for this purpose. Care staff should initiate further supplies if levels are getting below the recommended level that the home sets.

Dressing Application

Dressings should only be applied at the discretion of the senior person on duty and by care staff who have completed the relevant training. **The skin tear protocol included in the scheme should be used as a guide for application.**

- Wash and dry hands and put on disposable gloves before attending to the wound.
- Assess the wound.
- Select the appropriate dressing - referring to the protocol/ training manual. If the wound is not suitable to be dressed by a care assistant, advice should be sought from a District Nurse (or other relevant healthcare professional) immediately***.
- Check that the dressing to be used is still in date.
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions as provided with dressings in the box.
- Apply the dressing – referring to the protocol/training manual if necessary.
- Complete all relevant records.
- Re-assess the wound according to the protocol/training manual

*****Nursing or medical advice should be sought immediately if the wound is not a simple skin tear, deep, bleeding heavily or too big to be safely covered by available dressings.**

Recording

A record of each dressing application must be kept within the residents care plan/MAR chart folder; the record can be made using **Appendix C**.

The wound and resident's wellbeing should be monitored regularly and a record of this kept in the care plan. Nursing or medical advice must be sought at any time if there is deterioration that cannot be managed within the care home.

Associated paperwork:

- Skin Tear Protocol
- Care staff Authorised to Apply Dressings (Appendix A)
- First Dressing Scheme Audit Sheet (Appendix B)
- First Dressing Scheme Application Record (Appendix C)