

Protecting the Skin

Your skin is your immune system's first line of defense against infection, so protecting skin from injuries or breakdown is very important, especially if you are staying in the same position for much of the day.

Watch daily for signs or risks of skin breakdown:

- Reddened areas that do not fade
- Open areas or blisters on the skin
- A worsening of any open area of skin, such as redness, drainage, odor or warmth
- Difficulty with turning or changing position, especially if due to weakness or pain

What can help keep your skin healthy?

- Wash with warm water and mild soap.
- Avoid friction or rubbing.
- Clean your skin after each soiling.
- Use alcohol-free lotions to moisturize dry skin.
- Do not massage reddened areas.
- Apply moisture barrier creams or ointments to fragile skin that comes in contact with moisture.
- Raise heels off of the bed by placing pillows under calves and knees for support.
- Change position at least every two hours while in bed and every hour if sitting up in a chair.
- Keep the angle of the head of your bed at less than 30 degrees when you are not eating or drinking.
- Remove tight clothing, such as TED stockings, to allow your skin to breathe.
- Use pillows to protect against long periods of pressure on "bony prominences" (for example, between ankles, knees, behind back, under elbows, under calves to float heels). See diagram below for other sensitive points.

