Skin Care with Equipment and Clothing

The only way to know that your skin is healthy and intact is to check it regularly. Refer to Skin Care Basics for information on how to check your skin.

Skin Care and Equipment

It is important to ensure all your equipment is in good condition.

- **Shower commode chair:**
  - Tears in padding can cause skin damage, repair or replace the seat if torn.
  - Foam padding can flatten over time, replace as necessary.
  - A pressure lift or lean may be required if you sit on the commode for a long time.
  - Take care with transfers, skin tears are more likely to occur when your skin is wet and you have no clothes on.
  - Check your footplates and backrest are at the correct height i.e. hips and ankles at approximately 90 degrees.
  - Toilet seats should be padded if you are sitting directly on the toilet.

- **Hoist and slings:**
  - Should be the correct size and shape. Seek advice from your Occupational Therapist.
  - Ensure sling is applied correctly for maximum support and to protect your skin. Make sure the sling is not pulled through under your skin as friction can cause skin damage such as blisters and skin tears.
  - Do not continue to sit or lye on the sling – have it removed as soon as possible.
  - Avoid using a wet sling if possible.
  - Ensure the hoist is raised enough so your bottom doesn’t drag on the bed or chair when being transferred.

- **Wheelchair and cushion:**
  - Maintain your wheelchair and cushion in good condition. Your therapist will show you how to check that your special pressure redistribution cushion is working properly.
  - Ensure your wheelchair upholstery is in good condition.
  - Beware that the metal frame of your wheelchair will heat up in hot environments and can therefore cause burns to your skin if in direct contact.
Fact Sheet

Queensland Spinal Cord Injuries Service

SPINAL INJURIES UNIT
Ph: 3176 2737
Fax: 3176 7462

OUTPATIENT DEPARTMENT
Ph: 3176 2641
Fax: 3176 5644

Postal and Location
Princess Alexandra Hospital
Ipswich Rd
Woolloongabba QLD 4102
AUSTRALIA

TRANSITIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM
Ph: 3406 2322
Fax: 3406 2399

Email
trp@health.qld.gov.au

Location
3rd Floor, Centro Buranda
Cnr Cornwall St & Ipswich Rd
Buranda, QLD, 4102
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SPINAL OUTREACH TEAM
Ph: 3406 2300
Freecall 1800 624 832
(for regional clients)
Fax: 3406 2399

Email
spot@health.qld.gov.au

Postal
PO Box 6053
Buranda, QLD, 4102

Location
3rd Floor, Centro Buranda
Cnr Cornwall St & Ipswich Rd
Buranda, QLD, 4102
AUSTRALIA

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- Use a cushion in other places that you sit e.g. on the floor or in the car.

- **Splints and braces:**
  - Check your skin after wearing splints or braces. Pay particular attention to bony areas. If you develop red marks or skin problems contact your therapist.
  - Your splints and braces may require adjustment over time.
  - When wearing splints in bed make sure that the splint is not resting on a body part you cannot feel.

- **Bed and mattress:**
  - Ensure your bed and mattresses are compatible prior to purchase. Some pressure redistribution mattresses are overlays, others replace your existing mattress. Seek advice or more information from your Occupational Therapist.
  - Avoid sitting in a semi-reclined position for more than 20mins. In this position shearing forces can cause skin damage over your tailbone.

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*Skin Care and Clothing*

- It is important to be aware of the type and positioning of your clothing.
- Avoid clothes that are too tight, rough or thick seams and tight fitting underpants.
- Remove back pockets, studs and buttons.
- Ensure there are as few wrinkles as possible underneath you and that the rear seam is positioned between your buttocks.
- When wearing a new style of clothing, check your skin after 30mins to see whether there are marks. If there are no marks, increase the time of wearing those clothes as your skin tolerance allows.
- Avoid keeping anything in your pockets e.g. keys, mobile phones.
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- Metal holds heat, so if you have clothing with metal zippers or studs and you are near a heater or out in the sun, the metal parts on your clothing may burn your skin.
- Be careful not to catch your skin when doing up zips.
- Ensure leg bags are not worn too tightly.
- Footwear with a firm sole should be worn to protect your feet and maintain optimal foot position on footplates.
- Buy shoes that are at least one size bigger to accommodate any swelling.
- Check shoes for foreign bodies before putting them on.
- Avoid socks that are too tight or that have seams especially around the toes.
- Make sure the tongue of the shoe is not bunched up.
- Check the position of your toes in your shoes to ensure they are not caught or folded over.

For further information:
- Discuss with your treating health professional
- SPOT – 1800 624 832

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