

STANDARD 4: WOUND PREVENTION

Wound prevention is practised according to the best available evidence in order to achieve optimal outcomes for the individual and their wound.

Rationale

Prevention of wounds is a marker of high quality clinical care. Wound prevention is performed at both the organisation level as a component of risk reduction and continuous quality improvement, and at the individual level in accordance with identified risks.

Criteria for wound care practitioners

To meet the criteria for the *Wound Prevention Standard*, the wound care practitioner:

4.1. Promotes skin integrity and hygiene to reduce the individual's vulnerability to wounding.

Evidence Criteria

- 4.1.1. Implements a skin hygiene plan appropriate to the individual, with consideration to:¹⁻⁸
 - Avoidance of skin irritants.
 - Moisturiser to manage dry skin.
 - Use of pH friendly skin cleanser.
 - Attention to foot hygiene.
- 4.1.2. Implements strategies to prevent excessive moisture on the skin, including moisture associated with incontinence.^{3, 4, 9, 10}
- 4.1.3. Avoids interventions associated with increased risk of wounding (e.g., massage/rubbing, poor repositioning and manual handling techniques).^{3, 10}

4.2. Optimises the individual's general physical health to reduce the risk of wounding.

Evidence Criteria

- 4.2.1. Manages and optimises systemic factors and comorbidities that may increase the individual's risk of wounding.^{3, 7, 11-15}
- 4.2.2. Promotes adequate nutrition and hydration of individuals, with consideration to nutritional requirements for optimal health and correction of nutritional deficits.^{3-5, 8, 11, 16, 17}
- 4.2.3. Promotes cessation of smoking.^{11, 12, 18}
- 4.2.4. Encourages individuals to engage in regular mobility, activity and exercise as tolerated.^{3, 7, 19, 20}

4.3. Implements individualised strategies to prevent wound development based on clinical assessment and need.Evidence Criteria

4.3.1. Interprets the findings from a comprehensive assessment to inform, develop and document an individualised wound prevention plan.

4.3.2. Implements a wound prevention plan appropriate to the individual, that includes (as relevant):^{2-8, 10, 12-17, 19, 21-27}

- Regular screening and risk and skin assessment for:
 - Malnutrition.
 - Pressure injuries.
 - Burns.
 - Diabetic foot ulcers.
 - Leg ulcers.
 - Falls.
 - Skin cancer.
- Skin inspection on admission, transfer or change in status.
- Strategies to prevent pressure, friction and shear.
- Strategies to avoid skin trauma.
- Appropriate manual handling techniques.
- Nutritional support.
- Strategies to prevent device related pressure injuries.
- Burn prevention.
- Falls prevention.
- Application of twice daily moisturiser to the extremities of elderly individuals.
- Application of compression therapy for chronic venous insufficiency.
- Protective footwear and off-loading devices.
- Sun safe activities.
- Referral for assessment of skin lesions.

4.4. Optimises the individual's cognitive and mental status, psychosocial health and knowledge to reduce the risk of wounding.Evidence Criteria

4.4.1. Undertakes screening for mental health, cognitive and social factors that could impact wounding.

4.4.2. Facilitates access to specialist and support services.³

4.4.3. Collaborates with the multidisciplinary team to reinforce preventive strategies addressing cognitive status and psychosocial health (including mental health conditions) that may hinder the individual's ability to implement optimal wound prevention.³

4.4.4. Provides the individual and their family carer with relevant education about wound prevention strategies.^{3, 26, 27}

Criteria for wound service providers

To meet the criteria for the *Wound Prevention Standard*, the wound service provider:

4.5. Supports and facilitates the delivery of individualised, evidence-based wound prevention strategies.

Evidence criteria

- 4.5.1. Maximises environmental safety to reduce the risk of accidental wounding.¹⁹
- 4.5.2. Provides systems that promote the implementation of individualised, evidence-based wound prevention strategies.³
- 4.5.3. Provides access to a range of products for maintaining optimal skin health.³
- 4.5.4. Provides access to medical equipment, products and devices used to prevent wounds.^{3, 28}

4.6. Supports and drives the implementation of organisation level wound prevention programs.

Evidence criteria

- 4.6.1. Facilitates interventions aimed at reducing incidence and prevalence of wounds across the wound service.^{3, 16}

Background and Context

Minimising harm

Minimising patient harm is a fundamental component of the *Australian National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards*. Preventing avoidable wounds is an important component of preventing harm to the individual and therefore is a concept enshrined in national service accreditation standards.²¹

Harm minimisation is delivered both at the level of the individual, and at the facility level. At the individual level, a proactive clinical approach that relies on assessment and identification of risk factors for wounds should be used by wound care practitioners to inform the development of an individualised wound prevention plan. For some individuals, prevention of wounds focuses on disease and comorbidity management. This includes venous leg ulcers and diabetic foot ulcers, the prevention of which requires intensive education and skills development of the individual and their family carer to address systemic disease, as well as promoting skin health. Other individuals are at an increased risk of preventable wounds such as pressure injuries or skin tears, due to pre-existing conditions (e.g., older age, reduced mobility or falls risk) that increase the likelihood of accidental wounding.⁵ Understanding the complex nature of factors that lead to impairments to skin integrity and applying these to the individual is required to develop appropriate wound prevention plans at the individual level.^{5, 10}

Wound prevention programs delivered at the facility level seek to prevent harm to all individuals within the facility through organisation-wide interventions. Facility-wide wound prevention programs focus on preventable wounds that are exacerbated by environmental

factors (e.g., pressure injuries and skin tears).^{3, 29, 30} Introducing and maintaining a facility-level wound prevention program requires commitment and resources at the executive level, and motivation for change at all levels. Surveying and analysing the factors within the facility that are contributing to preventable wounds is the first step in designing a wound prevention program. Establishing a monitoring committee that regularly analyses, publishes and responds to wound incidence and prevalence results provides a driving force to maintain the program and inform facility-specific interventions.^{3, 31} Preventive initiatives that are supported by current evidence are generally multi-faceted and require interdisciplinary engagement to implement in an ongoing capacity. Staff and consumer education, environmental surveillance, review of equipment and resources in the facility, innovative use of technology are recommended components of wound prevention programs.^{3, 29, 30}

Related resources

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