Skin Tears

The Economics

A skin tear is a wound that results in the separation of skin layers due to shearing and friction forces or blunt trauma.¹

- Skin tears are common in elderly patients, especially those over 75 years of age and those dependant on others for care.¹
- The skin of older people is typically thinner, as well as becoming drier with reduced sebaceous and sweat gland activity.¹
- Dry skin in the elderly can be exacerbated by bathing, the use of alkaline soaps and certain medications (e.g., anti-inflammatories).¹
- Skin tears can lead to:
  - ulcers²
  - prolonged hospital stays
  - infection¹
  - distress for patients and families¹

The most common causes of skin tears:¹

- Blunt trauma
- Falls
- Daily living activities
- Dressing/treatment related
- Patient transfer
- Equipment injury
The economic impact of skin tears

- Apart from the pain and distress that skin tears cause, they can be expensive to treat.
- Treatment can be lengthy, requiring daily wound dressing changes and care.
- The estimated cost per patient to treat chronic wounds is $10,000 per year in Australia\(^3\)

### Annual chronic wound care costs in Australia\(^3\)

$2.85 Billion direct costs to hospitals and aged care facilities in 2010/11
Skin tear prevention studies

Two Australian trials have been conducted by the Wound Management Innovation CRC (part of the Australian Government’s Department of Industry and Science Co-operative Research Centres program)

**Trial 1 Western Australia**

- 984 aged care residents from 14 facilities, divided into intervention (n=420) and control (n=564) groups
- Residents in intervention group received twice-daily application of moisturiser on their arms and legs
- Residents in control group received ad hoc or no standardised skin-moisturising regimen

Average monthly incidence rate per 1,000 occupied bed days

- **Control Group**
  - 10.57
- **Intervention (Moisturiser) Group**
  - 5.76**

45% REDUCTION

*p=0.004  A total of 1,396 skin tears on 424 residents were recorded during the study.*
Trial 2 *Queensland*\(^5\)

- 430 patients aged over 65 years who were hospitalised
- All patients received twice-daily application of moisturiser (QV Skin Lotion) on their arms and legs
- Incidence of skin tears was compared to data from an incidence survey from the hospital

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reduction in skin tear patients</th>
<th>Reduction in skin tears</th>
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<tr>
<td>45%</td>
<td>51%</td>
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Ageing skin

- Skin becomes ‘wrinkly’ due to reduced elastin (elastic tissue), which makes the skin hang loosely.
- Skin appears more transparent because the epidermis (surface layer) gets thinner.
- Skin is more fragile due to a smoothing of the junction between the epidermis and dermis (central layer).
- Skin bruises more easily because the blood vessel walls become thinner.
How QV Gentle Wash and Skin Lotion help prevent tears in ageing skin

In addition to using a moisturiser that contains humectants twice-daily, a pH neutral, soap free cleanser can also reduce the risk of skin tears.\textsuperscript{1,2}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Cleanse with QV Gentle Wash</th>
<th>2. Moisturise with QV Skin Lotion twice-daily</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• 15% Glycerin</td>
<td>• pH balanced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Free from fragrance, colour, lanolin and propylene glycol</td>
<td>• Designed to cleanse the skin without drying</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• pH balanced</td>
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<td>• Low-irritant formulation</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Benefits for patients:</strong></td>
<td>• Free from fragrance, colour, lanolin and propylene glycol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Non-drying</td>
<td><strong>Benefits for patients:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Low irritation potential</td>
<td>• Helps seal in natural moisture by acting as a protective barrier</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Suitable for patients with eczema, dermatitis, psoriasis, dry and very dry skin</td>
<td>• Triple moisturising action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Non-soap surfactants foam and clean effectively without drying</td>
<td>• Suitable for patients with eczema, dermatitis, psoriasis and dry skin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Added humectant, glycerin, helps hydrate the skin</td>
<td>• Helps prevent and relieve dry skin</td>
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For further information, Prevention Program tools or to order QV Skin Lotion and QV Gentle Wash, please contact your Ego Representative on 1800 033 706.

References:
5. Finch K. Skin tear prevention in patients over 65 years of age in a hospital setting. Podium Presentation. 10th Australian Wound Management Association Conference; 2014 May 7–10; Brisbane, Australia.