

# Skin Tears: A Reference Guide

## Supporting your residents to get timely wound care

Skin tears are one of the most common injuries in older adults. As skin becomes thinner and more fragile with age, even small knocks or bumps can cause significant injury.

### What Is a Skin Tear?

A **skin tear** is a wound where the top layer of skin peels back or comes off completely. They often look dramatic and can bruise easily, even if the injury was minor.

#### Most common locations:

- Arms
- Legs
- Backs of hands



### Why Do Older People Get Skin Tears?

Several age related and health related factors make skin tears more likely:

#### Fragile or Dry Skin

Older skin loses elasticity and moisture, making it more delicate.

#### Everyday Bumps & Minor Trauma

Falls, knocks on furniture, or even removing adhesive plasters can cause tearing.

#### Health & Medication Factors

- Low fluid intake or poor nutrition
- Needing assistance with dressing/bathing
- Multiple medications
- Long-term steroid use
- Chronic conditions
- Smoking (accelerates skin ageing)

### Why Early Treatment Matters

Without proper care, skin tears can lead to:

- Infection
- Delayed healing
- Pain
- Re-opening of the wound



## Skin Tear First Aid

- **Wash hands** if you can before touching the wound.
- **Gently rinse** the area with tap water or saline. Do not scrub or use antiseptics.
- **If skin is still attached**, gently place it back in position. Do not cut it off.
- **Control bleeding** with gentle pressure using clean gauze.
- **Cover with a non-stick dressing** and secure lightly. Avoid tight bandages and strong adhesive on fragile skin.

Your on site nurse may be able to assist with an initial simple dressing while you refer to us for ongoing care.

## Your Pathway: Refer Directly to Community Nursing

Your residents may not need to see a GP.

Under ACC self-referrals if the skin tear is the result of an accident, the person can be referred, or self-refer, directly for community nursing if:

- They cannot get a timely GP appointment e.g. evenings/weekends
- It is difficult for them to physically attend a clinic e.g. mobility/transport

## Benefits for you and your residents

- Fast response time
- Care delivered in the comfort of their home
- Expert wound care nurses
- No GP visit required
- Easy process for Village Coordinators
- Already used successfully by many Metlifecare villages



**Self-referral is a simple and effective way to ensure residents receive the care they need quickly... especially helpful if an injury occurs at the end of my working days or weekends when access to doctors is limited.**

*Emily, Wellness Coordinator/  
Village Nurse  
Metlifecare The Poynton*

## Make a referral

- 1 Go to: <https://access.org.nz/refer>
- 2 Submit the resident's **details and brief description** of the injury
- 3 The Total Care Health team will:
  - Arrange a **home visit**
  - Manage dressings and follow-up
  - Provide ACC paperwork if relevant
  - Liaise with the person's GP team as needed



Scan to refer

☎ 09 630 1630

✉ [info@totalcarehealth.co.nz](mailto:info@totalcarehealth.co.nz)

🌐 [www.access.org.nz/total-care-health](http://www.access.org.nz/total-care-health)

  
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