



Keys to Maintaining Healthy Skin as You Age

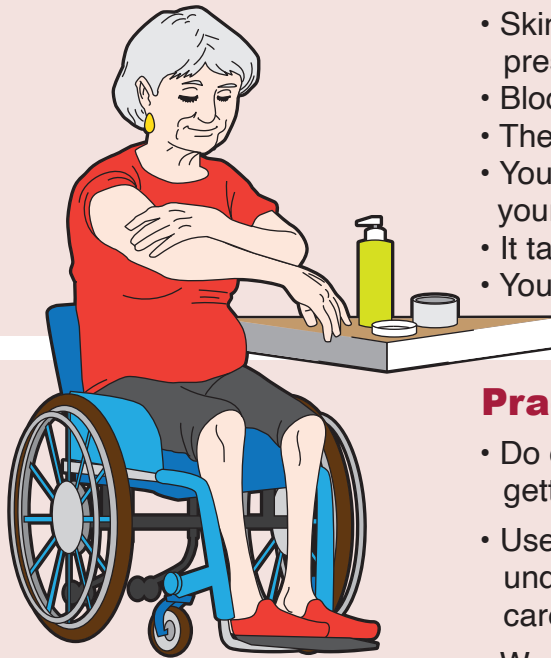
WITH SPINAL CORD INJURY (SCI)

What to Expect as You Age With SCI

Aging affects everyone's skin. SCI brings unique challenges. Reduced mobility and changes in sensation make it more likely that you will get pressure injuries. So, skin care is even more important than it was when you were younger.

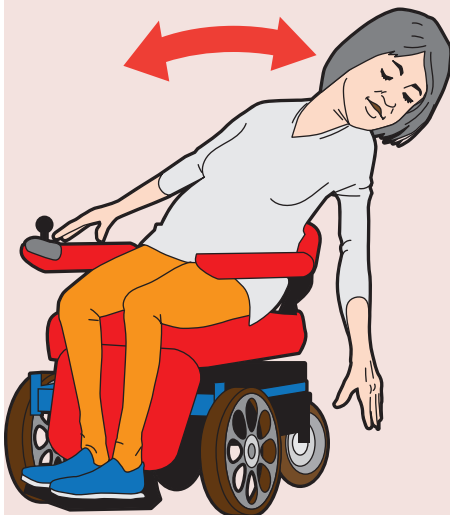
Common Skin Changes Due to Aging That Increase the Risk of Pressure Injuries

- Skin tolerance. This refers to how long your skin can be under pressure before damage starts to occur.
- Blood flow to the skin lessens.
- The outer layer of your skin thins.
- Your skin becomes less elastic and your sensation decreases.
- It takes longer for your skin to heal.
- Your skin becomes drier.



Practical Tips for Skin Care

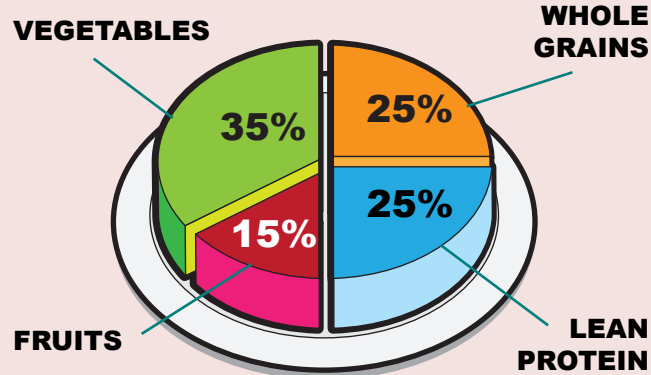
- Do daily skin checks. Focus on the areas at greatest risk for getting pressure injuries.
- Use moisturizer to keep your skin hydrated. For areas that are under a lot of pressure, talk to your doctor about what skin care products you should use.
- Wear proper clothing and use pressure relieving cushions and/or mattresses.
- Reposition or weight shift often to relieve pressure on the skin.
- Use sunscreen and wear protective clothing to guard against damage from the sun.
- Be aware of any changes in the condition of your skin. Watch for new pressure injuries. Seek medical advice right away if you have broken skin, skin discoloration, or a hardness or temperature change that lasts for two or more days.
- Exercise and stretch to increase or maintain your strength and flexibility. This will help you to make transfers that are safer for your skin.



Adopt Healthy Life Habits for Better Skin Health

- Stay hydrated.
- Eat healthy foods that are rich in nutrients that are good for your skin. These include vitamins C and E, essential fatty acids, protein, zinc, and carotenoids (plant sources of Vitamin A).
- Limit your intake of caffeine and alcohol.
- Quit smoking.
- Be as active as you can be.
- Maintain a healthy weight.

HEALTHY PLATE



Adjust Your Equipment When Needed

- Use proper cushion and equipment to protect your skin.
- Have your equipment and cushion rechecked to make sure they meet your changing needs.
- If you need more equipment or help with transfers, ask your medical/therapy team for advice.

For more information about ways to care for your skin's health as you age with SCI, visit:
<https://msktc.org/sci/factsheets/aging-and-sci> and
<https://msktc.org/sci/factsheets/recognizing-and-treating-pressure-sores>.

Source: The content of this infographic was adapted from the Aging With a Spinal Cord Injury factsheet developed by Philip Requejo, PhD, Elizabeth Pasipanodya, PhD, and the SCI Aging Special Interest Group of the SCI Model Systems in collaboration with the Model Systems Knowledge Translation Center (<https://msktc.org/>).

Disclaimer: This information is not meant to replace the advice of a medical professional. You should consult your health care provider regarding specific medical concerns or treatment. The contents of the infographic were developed under a grant from the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR grant number 90DPKT0009). NIDILRR is a Center within the Administration for Community Living (ACL), Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The contents of this infographic do not necessarily represent the policy of NIDILRR, ACL, or HHS, and you should not assume endorsement by the federal government.

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