

Chapter 24

Assisting With Wound Care

Wound Care

- A wound is a break in the skin or mucous membrane.
- The wound is a portal of entry for microbes.
 - Infection is a major threat.
- Wound care involves:
 - Preventing infection
 - Preventing further injury to the wound and nearby tissues

Skin Tears

- A skin tear is a break or rip in the skin.
 - The epidermis separates from the underlying tissues.
- Skin tears are caused by:
 - Friction and shearing
 - Pulling or pressure on the skin
 - Bumping a hand, arm, or leg on any hard surface
 - Holding the person's arm or leg too tight
- Tell the nurse at once if you cause or find a skin tear.

Circulatory Ulcers

- An ulcer is a shallow or deep crater-like sore of the skin or a mucous membrane.
- Circulatory ulcers (vascular ulcers) are open sores on the lower legs or feet.
 - They are caused by decreased blood flow through the arteries or veins.

Circulatory Ulcers, cont'd.

- Venous ulcers (stasis ulcers)

- Are open sores on the lower legs or feet
- Are caused by poor blood flow through the veins
- Are commonly found on the heels and inner aspect of the ankles

- Arterial ulcers

- Are open wounds on the lower legs or feet caused by poor arterial blood flow
- Are found between the toes, on top of the toes, and on the outer side of the ankle

Circulatory Ulcers, cont'd.

- A diabetic foot ulcer is an open wound on the foot caused by complications from diabetes.
 - Diabetes can affect the nerves and blood vessels.
 - The doctor orders drugs and treatments as needed.
 - To help prevent skin breakdown on the legs and feet, check the person's legs and feet every day.
 - Elastic stockings (AE stockings, TED hose) and elastic bandages exert pressure on the veins.
 - The pressure promotes venous blood return to the heart. This helps prevent blood clots (thrombi).

Dressings

- Wound dressings have many functions. They:
 - Protect wounds from injury and microbes
 - Absorb drainage
 - Remove dead tissue
 - Promote comfort
 - Cover unsightly wounds
 - Provide a moist environment for wound healing
 - Apply pressure (pressure dressings) to help control bleeding

Securing Dressings

● Securing dressings

- Tape and Montgomery ties are used to secure dressings.
 - Adhesive tape sticks well to the skin.
 - Paper, plastic, and cloth tapes usually do not cause allergic reactions.
 - Elastic tape allows movement of the body part.
 - Tape is applied to the top, middle, and bottom parts of the dressing.
 - The tape extends several inches beyond each side of the dressing.
 - Tape is not applied to circle the entire body part.

Securing Dressings, cont'd.

- Montgomery ties are used for large dressings and frequent dressing changes.
 - Two or three Montgomery ties may be needed on each side.
 - The ties are undone for the dressing change.
 - The adhesive strips are not removed unless soiled.
- Binders are wide bands of elastic fabric.
 - They are applied to the abdomen, chest, or perineal areas.
 - Binders promote healing because they:
 - Support wounds
 - Hold dressings in place
 - Prevent or reduce swelling
 - Promote comfort
 - Prevent injury

Securing Dressings, cont'd.

- Abdominal binders provide abdominal support and holds dressings in place.
- Breast binders:
 - Support the breasts after surgery
 - Apply pressure to the breasts after childbirth in the non–breast-feeding mother
 - Promote comfort and support swollen breasts after childbirth
- T-binders secure dressings in place after rectal and perineal surgeries.
 - The single T-binder is for women.
 - The double T-binder is for men.

Heat and Cold Applications

- Heat and cold applications:
 - Promote healing and comfort
 - Reduce tissue swelling
 - Have opposite effects on body function

Heat and Cold Applications, cont'd.

- Heat applications are often used for musculoskeletal injuries or problems.
 - They relieve pain, relax muscles, and decrease joint stiffness.
 - They promote healing and reduce tissue swelling.
 - When heat is applied to the skin:
 - Blood vessels in the area dilate (expand or open wider).
 - Blood flow increases.
 - Tissues have more oxygen and nutrients for healing.
 - Excess fluid is removed from the area faster.
 - The skin is red and warm.

Heat and Cold Applications, cont'd.

- Complications

- High temperatures can cause burns.
- When heat is applied too long, blood vessels constrict.
- Persons at risk for complications include:
 - Older and fair-skinned persons
 - Persons with problems sensing heat and pain
 - Persons with metal implants

- Moist heat has greater and faster effects than dry heat.

- Moist heat applications include hot compresses, hot soaks, sitz baths, and hot packs.

- Dry heat applications stay at the desired temperature longer.

- Some hot packs and the aquathermia pad are dry heat applications.

Heat and Cold Applications, cont'd.

- Cold applications reduce pain, prevent swelling, and decrease circulation and bleeding.
 - Cold has the opposite effect of heat.
 - When cold is applied to the skin, blood vessels constrict.
 - Decreased blood flow reduces the amount of bleeding.
 - Less fluid collects in the tissues.
 - Cold has a numbing effect on the skin.

Heat and Cold Applications, cont'd.

- Complications include:
 - Pain, burns, blisters, and poor circulation
 - When cold is applied for a long time, blood vessels dilate.
 - Persons at risk for complications include:
 - Older and fair-skinned persons
 - Persons with sensory impairments
- Moist cold applications penetrate deeper than dry ones.
 - The cold compress is a moist cold application.
- Dry cold applications include ice bags, ice collars, and ice gloves.
- Cold packs can be moist or dry applications.