



HEALTH AWARENESS

Maintaining Healthy Skin: A Delicate Balance

(NAPSA)—When caring for a loved one who is bedridden or has difficulty moving around, one of the biggest challenges is keeping the person's fragile skin healthy. That's because when skin breaks down, serious problems can occur.

The worst kind of skin breakdown is the pressure ulcer, commonly known as a bed sore. When skin doesn't get the blood supply it needs, the body's soft tissue can get trapped between a bony point and a hard support surface, such as a chair or bed. If this happens for too long, the skin will break and tear away, leaving a hole.

Experts in home health care say that caregivers can help prevent pressure ulcers by combining good skin care with proper support.

"The body is three-dimensional, and you need a surface that's soft and flexible," says Dr. James Spahn, CEO of EHOB, Inc., a company that makes seating and bedding products to help prevent and heal bed sores. "Support surfaces such as seat cushions and mattresses filled with air are perfect, because they don't constrict the blood vessels."

Dr. Kwon Lee, a general surgeon and a consultant to Conva-Tec, makers of the Aloe Vesta brand of skincare products, says that older, delicate skin does not have the same integrity and vigor as young skin, and requires special care. He advises caregivers to avoid using soap and water, which can remove the skin's natural oils. Instead, he suggests washing with specially formulated aloe-based products.



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Drs. Spahn and Lee recommend these additional tips to help maintain healthy skin:

- Provide proper nutrition and encourage plenty of fluids.

- Turn regularly/keep mobile. Ask a healthcare professional for help in developing an appropriate passive or active exercise program for your loved one.

- Inspect the skin regularly for redness or irritation—the first sign of a problem.

- Give proper incontinence care. Clean, moisturize and protect the skin with products specially designed for that purpose.

- Lift and transfer a person carefully. Dragging can tear fragile skin.

These tips come from The Caregivers Marketplace, the first free national program offering savings and education to anyone who gives, gets or needs care. To enroll and receive a free resource guide along with a cash back and discount card, visit the Web site at www.caregiversmarketplace.com or call toll-free 1-866-327-8340.