

# Skin Health Self-Management Plan

- Inspect your skin daily, particularly your feet to catch any skin problems early.
- Moisturize your skin regularly and protect your hands and feet, particularly after bathing.
- Washing your hands is the easiest and most important method of protecting against bacteria.
- Drink water. Maintaining hydration is very important.
- Use a “broad spectrum sunscreen” that protects against both ultraviolet B radiation (UVB) and ultraviolet A radiation (UVA). Limit time you spend in the sun from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
- Trim your fingernails and toenails carefully to avoid small cuts or tears.
- Avoid sharing personal items, like towels and razors.

## Green Flags — All Clear

## What this means ...



### If you have:

- No open wounds, rashes, or skin breakdown.
- A habit of regularly washing your hands

- Good work!

**Keep up the great work!**

## Yellow Flags — Caution

## What this means ...



### If you have:

- Red, painful pustules
- Non-healing wounds or wounds that are draining yellow pus
- Inflamed boils (can be the size of a pea to the size of an orange)
- Area of skin that is tender, swollen and painful
- Red, cracked, or flaky skin
- Itching
- A mole that changes color or shape
- A dome-shape bump that appears shiny or “pearly”
- History of sunburn and long periods of sun exposure
- Have a mild fever ranging from 101–103, or a moderate fever from 102–103

- You may have an infection, an abscess, or a skin ulcer
- You could be having a side effect to a medication
- You could have a type of skin cancer
- Prolonged exposure to the sun without a sun screen places you at higher risk for skin cancer

**Call your doctor, consulting nurse, or health care provider if symptoms do not improve.**

**Name:**

**Number:**

**Instructions:**

**If you notice a Yellow Flag, work closely with your health care team.**

## Red Flags — Stop and Think

## What this means ...



### If you have:

- Red, swollen, tender skin and you have a fever of 100.4 or greater
- A crepitus or crackling, popping sensation under the skin due to gas in the soft tissues
- A rash
- A fever of 104 or higher

- You may have an infection or allergic reaction to a food, medication, or plant
- You need to be evaluated by a health care professional immediately.

**If possible, notify your health care provider's office.**

**Name:**

**Number:**

**Follow these instructions: CALL 9-1-1**

**If you notice a Red Flag, CALL 911. Emergency!**

# Skin Health Fast Facts

- Your skin is the largest and most visible organ of the human body. It is an ever-changing organ that contains many specialized cells and structures.
- The skin functions as a protective barrier against environmental factors and it is very involved in maintaining the proper temperature for the body to function well.
- Skin plays an active role in the immune system protecting us from disease.
- The skin has three layers—the epidermis, dermis, and subcutaneous tissue.
- Skin changes with age. It becomes thinner and loses fat. You might notice dry skin not caused by a specific medical condition, e.g. psoriasis.
- Prolonged sun exposure can lead to age spots, skin cancers and other skin problems. Age spots, or flat, brown spots might be seen on the face, hands, arms, back, or feet and can often be caused by sun exposure.
- Skin tags, flesh-colored growths may be found on the eyelids, neck, arm pit area, chest, and even the groin area.
- An injury like a scratch, cut, or abrasion can take longer to heal.
- Smoking narrows the tiny blood vessels in the outermost layers of skin and decreases blood flow, causing a depletion of oxygen and nutrients that skin needs for health.
- Skin and soft tissue bacterial infections are common in IV drug use. This is caused from injection of drugs into the fatty layer under the skin, the leakage of drugs out of veins during the injection, tissue death caused from the toxic materials in drugs, and an increase in the numbers of bacteria on the skin surface.

## What can you do?

- Prevent dry skin by taking a shower no longer than 10 minutes with warm water. A longer shower can dry out your skin, as can water that is too hot.
- Protect your skin against the sun. Use sun screen. It's best to use a "broad spectrum" sunscreen with a Sun Protection Factor (SPF) number of 30 or higher. Consider wearing a hat to cover or shade your neck, ears, eyes, and head.
- If you smoke, consider quitting or reducing the amount that you smoke daily.
- If you have a wound, cover it completely, unless otherwise instructed by your health care provider.
- Use medications, including topical ointments/screens, as prescribed
- Wash your hands!!!
  - Before, during, and after preparing food
  - Before eating food
  - Before and after caring for someone who is sick
  - Before and after treating a cut or wound
  - After using the toilet
  - After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing
  - After touching an animal or animal waste
  - After handling pet food or pet treats
  - After touching garbage

## Aging and Disability Services

Aging and Disability Services (ADS)—the Area Agency on Aging for King County— plans, coordinates, and advocates for comprehensive services for older adults, family caregivers, and people with disabilities throughout Seattle and King County.

For more information, call 1-844-348-5464 or e-mail [info@communitylivingconnections.org](mailto:info@communitylivingconnections.org)



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