

Skin Health Self-Management Plan

- Inspect your skin daily, particularly your feet, to note 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 (UVB) and ultraviolet A (UVA) radiation. 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, tears, or scratches.
- Avoid sharing personal items like towels and razors.

Green Flags—All Clear



If you have:

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

What this means ...

- Good work!

Keep up the great work!

Yellow Flags—Caution



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-shaped bump that appears shiny or “pearly”
- History of sunburn and long periods of sun exposure
- Mild fever ranging from 101–103 degrees, or a moderate fever from 102–103 degrees

What this means ...

- 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 sunscreen 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



If you have:

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

What this means ...

- 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 9-1-1. Emergency!

Skin Health Fast Facts

- Your skin is the largest and most visible organ of your body. It is an ever-changing organ that contains many specialized cells and structures.
- Your skin functions as a protective barrier against environmental factors. It is very involved in maintaining the proper temperature for your body to function well.
- Skin plays an active role in the immune system, protecting us from disease.
- 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—flat, brown spots that may be seen on the face, hands, arms, back, or feet—can often be caused by sun exposure.
- Skin tags—flesh-colored growths—may be found on the eyelids, neck, arm pit areas, chest, and even in 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.
- Use a gentle soap. Avoid antibacterial and deodorant soaps.
- Protect your skin against the sun. Use sunscreen. It is 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 information about services, call 844-348-5464 or e-mail info@communitylivingconnections.org.



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