



# Skin tears in senior living communities: Setting realistic expectations

Skin tears are a common yet often misunderstood issue in senior living communities. These injuries can be distressing for both the residents and their families. By setting realistic expectations and fostering open communication, senior living facilities can help families understand the nature of skin tears, their causes, and the preventive measures in place. This article aims to provide guidance on how to effectively manage family expectations regarding skin tears, helping ensure a supportive and informed environment for all.

## Education and communication

- **Start Early:** Begin discussions about skin tears during the resident's admission process.
- **Family Meetings:** Organize family meetings to discuss care plans, including skin tear prevention and management.
- **Clear Communication:** Explain the common occurrence of skin tears in older adults and their preventability.

## Provide context

- **Frequency:** Share statistics on skin tear prevalence: It is estimated that up to 1.5 million occurrences happen annually in the U.S.<sup>1</sup>
- **Risk Factors:** Explain that skin tears are more common in elderly individuals and those with chronic illnesses.
- **Preventability:** Emphasize that most skin tears are preventable with proper care.

## Realistic expectations

- **Informed Consent:** Discuss the possibility of skin tears as part of informed consent during admission.
- **Normalcy:** Normalize skin tears as a common occurrence in senior living.
- **Preventive Measures:** Assure families that the facility takes preventive measures seriously.

## Preventive strategies

- **Education:** Educate families on skin care routines, fall prevention and proper handling techniques.
- **Regular Assessments:** Explain that regular skin assessments are essential for early detection.
- **Collaboration:** Involve families in preventive strategies (e.g., repositioning, moisturizing, avoiding adhesive dressings).

## Transparency

- **Reporting:** Be transparent about any skin tears that occur.
- **Timely Updates:** Keep families informed about wound progress and healing timelines.
- **Address Concerns:** Address family concerns promptly and empathetically.

<sup>1</sup> [woundsinternational.com/made-easy/skin-tears-and-skin-tone/#:~:text=It%20is%20estimated%20that%20the,Tiggelen%20and%20Beeckman%2C%202022](https://woundsinternational.com/made-easy/skin-tears-and-skin-tone/#:~:text=It%20is%20estimated%20that%20the,Tiggelen%20and%20Beeckman%2C%202022)).