How can skin breakdown be prevented?
It is possible to prevent skin damage or breakdown by maintaining mobility, managing incontinence, maintaining nutrition and regular skin care by using of the appropriate skin care regime and products.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Benefits</th>
<th>Precautions</th>
<th>Barrier Film</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bath additive</td>
<td>Soap substitute</td>
<td>Prevent dryness caused by soap based cleansers</td>
<td>Best used at night; care to be taken to avoid slipping if used in the bath</td>
<td>×</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creams</td>
<td>Light moisturiser</td>
<td>Used for prevention or treatment</td>
<td>Do not over apply</td>
<td>×</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ointment</td>
<td>High oil content</td>
<td>Treatment for dry thick scaly skin</td>
<td>Do not over apply</td>
<td>×</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barrier Films</td>
<td>Barrier forming, durable</td>
<td>Protect skin against environmental factors e.g. friction, moisture</td>
<td>Apply sparingly</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barrier Creams</td>
<td>Barrier forming, durable</td>
<td>Protect skin against environmental factors e.g. friction, moisture</td>
<td>Apply sparingly</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What can I do to help?
- Regularly inspect skin for signs of vulnerability
- Assess skin for redness and any signs of skin breakdown
- Wash your skin regularly with warm water and a mild, pH balanced cleanser
- Moisturise skin, especially dry areas with cream/ointments as advised by a health care professional
- Avoid “rubbing” the skin when applying creams
- Avoid damage to the skin through abrasions, tears etc

Patient safety
An important aspect of patient safety is the promotion and maintenance of skin integrity which is one of the most important roles for clinicians in all care settings and must never be under prioritised - (Professor Stephen-Haynes 2011).

Supporting education in healthcare

The National Patient Safety Agency [www.npsa.nhs.uk/nrls](http://www.npsa.nhs.uk/nrls)
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Supported by an education grant from Aspen Medical in support of Sorbaderm.
If you would like this information in other formats or languages please call 01905 760020 or email - pct.communications@worcestershire.nhs.uk

Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust
What is vulnerable skin?
Skin that is at risk of breakdown due to the loss of its natural protective barrier.

What factors increase the risk of skin damage?
- Lack of skin care
- Mobility
- Nutrition
- Incontinence
- Poor blood supply
- Smoking
- Environment/activity/lifestyle
- Underlying illness
- Trauma
- Drugs
- Steroids
- Age

What can cause skin damage?
- Friction and shear
- Pressure
- Dry skin
- Incontinence
- Skin Tears
- Excess moisture, e.g. from wounds, perspiration etc.

Skin assessment
Skin should be assessed with particular attention to the prominences such as the heels and sacrum. Redness is an indicator of early skin damage and actions should be taken to protect and prevent further damage:

S - Skin care
Cleansing and the use of appropriate protective barrier

K - Keep moving
Mobilisation and repositioning

I - Incontinence
Skin should be immediately cleansed and moisturised after each episode

N - Nutrition
Eating a well balanced diet and drinking plenty of fluids

What are the consequences of skin breakdown?
- Discomfort or pain
- Development of a wound
- Risk of wound infection
- Altered body image
- Reduced quality of life

Further advice is available from
www.nhs.uk/Livewell/skin/Pages/Keepskinhealthy.aspx