

49. HIGH INTENSITY DAILY ACTIVITIES: Complex Wound Care Policy and Procedure

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Purpose

The aim of this policy and procedure is to detail complex wound care support procedures, according to established performance standards and guidelines, to reduce risks and ensure participants requiring complex wound care support receive appropriate support that is relevant and proportionate to their individual needs.

Effective complex wound care support is critical to prevent further breakdown in skin integrity and to minimise further complications. Ongoing timely clinical decision making in wound healing responses facilitates the optimal healing of wounds. Effective complex wound care support also applies to supporting participants at high risk of pressure injuries and includes:

- prevention and management of wounds and pressure injuries when they arise and
- skills and knowledge to support participants to use equipment such as lymphoedema machines and assistive circulatory devices.

Scope

The procedures in this document apply to all Australian Quality Care staff providing complex wound care support, and meets relevant legislation, regulations and Standards as set out in *Schedule 1 Legislative References*.

Expectations for complex wound care support may be relevant when supporting participants with diabetes. In these cases, staff should refer to the *Subcutaneous Injections Policy and Procedure*.

Applicable NDIS Practice Standards and NDIS High Intensity Support Skills Descriptors

Outcome

Each participant requiring complex wound management receives appropriate support relevant and proportionate to their individual needs.

Indicators (NDIS Practice Standards)

- Each participant is involved in the assessment and development of the support plan for their specific wound support. With their consent, the participant's health status is subject to regular and timely review by an appropriately qualified health practitioner. The plan identifies how incidents and emergencies will be managed, including what risk factors to look for, techniques to support prevention of pressure injuries, classification of wounds and basic trouble shooting procedures and required actions for escalation to ensure participant wellbeing.
- Appropriate policies and procedures are in place, including timely supervision support, resources and equipment and a training plan for workers, that relate to the support provided to each participant requiring complex wound management.
- All workers working with a participant requiring complex wound management have received training, relating specifically to the participant's needs that are affected by their wound management

regime (for example, showering, toileting, and mobility) and high intensity support skills descriptor for providing complex wound management, delivered by an appropriately qualified health practitioner or person that meets the high intensity support skills descriptor for complex wound management.

Indicators (NDIS Skills Descriptors)

- All workers to maintain open communication, seek regular feedback and work closely with participants to understand their specific needs, when and how to best deliver supports that meets with their timing, frequency and type of support required.
- All workers to deliver supports in ways that are least intrusive or restrictive and that fits into the participants daily routines and preferences and actively involves the participant in their support as outlined in their support plan to the extent they choose.
- Annual competency assessment of workers by appropriate qualified health professionals to be undertaken to ensure currency of skills and knowledge, awareness and understanding of the relevant support plan.
- Refreshers / assessments of competency by appropriately qualified health practitioners to be undertaken and successfully completed by the worker when the participants support plan changes, best practice requirements change or when the worker has not provided the required support in the last 3 months. Timeframe for refreshers and re-assessments can vary on the nature of supports and workers experience.
- Audit records to be maintained.

Definitions

Acute Wound – a traumatic or surgical wound that heals through a process of granulation, contraction, and epithelialisation. An acute wound is expected to progress through the phases of normal healing, resulting in the closure of the wound.

Chronic Wound – a wound that fails to progress healing or respond to treatment over the normal expected healing timeframe (2 to 4 weeks) and becomes “stuck” in the inflammatory phase. Wound healing is delayed by the presence of intrinsic and extrinsic factors including medications (immunosuppressants), poor nutrition, co-morbidities, or inappropriate dressing choice.

Complex Wound – require a multi-disciplinary team approach as wounds are often multifaceted, either chronic or acute, making treatment difficult. Complex wounds include diabetic foot ulcers, pressure ulcers, venous ulcers, venous insufficiency ulcers, infected wounds, vasculitis-related wounds, and immunosuppressants therapy that resists healing with simple treatment. Early identification of risk factors, assessment, exclusion of disease processes, wound cleansing, timely dressing changes, appropriate dressing choice, antibiotic prescription, and nutrition considerations are some of the critical factors in complex wound care support.

Skin Tear – a traumatic wound occurring as a result of friction, or shearing and friction forces, which separate the epidermis from the dermis (partial thickness wound), or which separate both the epidermis and dermis from underlying structures (full thickness wounds).

Pressure Injury – injury caused by unrelieved pressure of the tissue that is compressed between a bony prominence and an external surface, either through shearing, friction, force, or moisture. This leads to the occlusion of the vascular and lymph node vessels that supply oxygen and nutrients to the tissue, resulting in pressure sores.

Policy

Australian Quality Care is committed to ensuring participants requiring complex wound care support receive safe, appropriate, and relevant support proportionate to their individual wound care needs.

Risk Analysis

Identified Risks

Risks associated with complex wound care include:

- inability of the participant to reposition independently
- health conditions including diabetes. Note: for participants with diabetes, all wounds are a serious health condition and require careful attention due to impaired wound healing. Diabetic wounds have a high risk of infection and inflammation as the wounds heal slower due to the wound site being open for longer. There is also a much higher risk of gangrene, sepsis, or bone infection, e.g., osteomyelitis
- for skin or wound infections, lack of awareness of instructions to inspect or replace dressings
- for pressure sores - inability to recognise risk and symptoms of pressure and when to refer to the Registered Nurse and relevant health practitioner
- poor aseptic techniques and infection control practices and
- lack of sufficient knowledge and skill in undertaking complex wound care support procedures.

Risk Management Strategies

Strategies to reduce risks for complex wound care support include:

- staff to be trained by an appropriately qualified health professional on the requirements of complex wound care support, how to recognise wound complications, infections and actions to take, and knowledge of skin breakdown risks and strategies to minimise those risks
- a comprehensive skin assessment conducted by an RN to identify risk factors associated with the participant's medical history and other triggering factors that may affect the wound healing processes, e.g., Diabetes, or Osteomyelitis
- frequent repositioning for pressure relief (this may include prompting of participant).
- appropriate diet to support healing
- use of assistive circulatory devices, e.g., lymphoedema machines
- for participants with diabetes – daily skin and feet checks for cuts, blisters, ulcers, etc., for early intervention
- *Complex Wound Care Support Plans* to be written by a health professional in consultation with other relevant health professionals involved in the participant's care
- staff to strictly follow expert advice and *Complex Wound Care Support Plans* to avoid hazards, risks, and adverse events
- *Complex Wound Support Plans* in place and readily accessible and available to staff where complex wound care is provided
- regular review of *Complex Wound Care Support Plans* and when any abnormality is observed and
- Support workers to be up to date with emergency First Aid knowledge.

Roles and Responsibilities

Australian Quality Care requires that participants be provided with complex wound care support that supports their health and welfare, is based on their individual needs and preferences, and is delivered with care and compassion.

To achieve the above outcomes, Australian Quality Care will undertake the following actions:

1. A *Complex Wound Care Support Plan* has been developed and is overseen by a relevant health practitioner, and each participant is involved in the assessment and development of their *Support Plan*. Plans include how risks, incidents, and emergencies will be managed and when to refer to the Registered Nurse or a health practitioner.
2. *Complex Wound Care Support Plans* are up-to-date, readily available, clear, and concise, and clearly identify and describe the support needs and preferences of participants.

3. participants are supported to seek regular and timely reviews of their health status and *Complex Wound Care Support Plan* by an appropriately qualified health practitioner.
4. Each participant's *Complex Wound Care Support Plan* is communicated, where appropriate and with their consent, to their support network, other providers, and relevant government agencies.
5. Workers understand the support needs outlined in *Complex Wound Care Support Plans* such as:
 - individual needs and preferences
 - techniques to support prevention and management of pressure injuries and wounds
 - what risks to look for and
 - action required to respond to risks, incidents, and emergencies.
6. Policies, procedures, and plans are in place and easily accessible to workers, including a training plan for workers that relates to the specific needs of each participant receiving complex wound care.
7. Skilled, trained, and experienced workers are allocated to manage participants with complex wound care needs, as support provided is high risk and complex, and can be life threatening if not effectively managed.
8. Where supports are delivered by a competent worker who is not a qualified or allied health practitioner, the Registered Nurse ensures:
 - the worker is suitably trained and equipped with the skills and knowledge required for safe service delivery and maintains currency of skills and knowledge
 - competency of workers' skills and knowledge is assessed annually
 - refreshers are completed when participants' needs change, best practice requirements change, or when the worker has not provided the required support in the last three (3) months
 - supports are not provided until workers have successfully completed competency assessments and refresher training and
 - competency assessments are documented and regularly audited, with audit records and a *Training and Development Register* maintained.
9. The *Complex Wound Care Support Plan* is signed by the health practitioner and participant, agreeing and confirming the need and consent for support.
10. Support Workers who are deployed to care for participants with complex wound care needs have completed training and education delivered by an appropriately qualified health professional, and receive regular supervision, support, equipment, and consumables required to provide the supports.

Complex Wound Care training is to include:

- basic understanding of symptoms of pressure injuries, such as blistering, swelling, dry patches, a change in colouring, or shiny or warm areas
- basic understanding of risk factors for pressure injuries, for example, unable to reposition independently, and participants with health conditions including diabetes
- common strategies to prevent pressure areas and worsening wound status, including frequent repositioning (which may include prompting for the participant), appropriate diet to support healing, and use of assistive equipment such as lymphoedema machines or assistive circulatory devices
- basic understanding of the process and stages of wound healing, to identify improving or deteriorating conditions
- when and how to involve or get advice from the appropriate health practitioner
- following the *Complex Wound Care Support Plan* to inspect or replace dressings (under supervision of the Registered Nurse or health practitioner and only when indicated in the *Complex Wound Care Support Plan*)
- common skin integrity risks and actions to take
- common indications of infection and reporting pathways
- implications of prolonged or worsening infection
- skin integrity issues (e.g., for diabetics) and required actions and
- reporting responsibilities including handover, recording observations, and incident reporting.

11. In addition to the above, workers must also complete all relevant eLearning modules available on the NDIS Commission's website, keep their first aid knowledge and CPR training up-to-date, and be trained on the specific needs of each participant, the type of complex wound care required and appropriate use of equipment.
12. Australian Quality Care accesses appropriate equipment for participants who require complex wound care support and provides staff with the required training on equipment use and maintenance.
13. Workers communicate with participants using their preferred communication method e.g., use of devices, aides, or language resources as needed, e.g., picture cards.
14. Referrals are facilitated as required by the Registered Nurse to other health providers, in collaboration and with consent from the participant.
15. The Registered Nurse monitors compliance with the NDIS Practice Standards and High Intensity Support Skills Descriptors through internal audits and stakeholder feedback, to ensure service provision is appropriate and effective.
16. The Registered Nurse:
 - ensures all support workers undertake the necessary training
 - maintains training records and appropriate registrations and
 - monitors staff compliance.
17. *Complex Wound Care Support Plans* are to be reviewed by a suitably qualified Health Practitioner, evaluated, and updated regularly as changes occur to wound care needs, to ensure appropriate complex wound care is provided.
18. All health professionals and consulting Health Practitioners are accountable for their own practice and are aware of their own legal and professional responsibilities within the Code of Practice of their professional body.

Precautions/Considerations

Check and ensure the participant's *Complex Wound Care Support Plan* is correct and current and that they have received information relating to any intended procedure and given appropriate consent.

Report to and liaise with the Registered Nurse regarding the participant's other health conditions, (e.g., Diabetes, Osteomyelitis) that could affect wound care healing.

Review the participant's nutritional status and consider mealtime supplements for wound healing in consultation with their Dietician.

Infection control considerations - support workers are to comply with the specific requirements for hand hygiene and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), in line with Australian Quality Care's *Infection Prevention and Control Policy and Procedures*.

Equipment Required

- Specific equipment and dressings as required to support each participant's complex wound care support, as indicated in their *Complex Wound Care Support Plan*.
- PPE such as gloves, masks, disposable gowns, and eye protection, as needed.
- Manual handling equipment as required for repositioning.
- Assistive circulatory devices as recommended by the health practitioner.

Procedures

As complex wound care support is highly personal in nature and high risk, workers need to maintain communication and work closely with participants to understand their specific needs, and when and how to best deliver supports that meet the participant's preferences and daily routines.

Complex Wound Care Support Procedures

NOTE: *Specific procedures for Complex Wound Care Support are covered in Appendices (1 - 9).*

The Registered Nurse is to:

1. Undertake a *Wound Assessment* to include wound aetiology (medical history) and complete a *Complex Wound Care Support Plan*.
2. Ensure the assessment includes usual skin condition, level of pressure injury risk, what to look for, and strategies to prevent risks. *Wound Assessment Charts* must state date of assessment, wound location, strategies adopted, and underlying issues (such as odour, exudate, etc.).
3. Prescribe dressings to be used.
4. Undertake wound evaluation when a change in wound condition is identified. Progressive wound evaluations must be documented in the *Treatment Chart* for individual wound status, to be completed at each dressing.
5. Document progressive changes in complex wound care in the participant's progress notes.
6. Manage all complex wounds from identification until healed, including assessments, dressings, pressure relief support (e.g., re-positioning schedule, and use of appropriate pressure relieving devices), ensuring nutritional support (e.g., protein, vitamins, and kilojoule management) and providing education and rehabilitation information (e.g., lifestyle factors, and maintaining healed tissue).
7. Liaise and discuss with others involved with the participant's care on scheduling wound dressing to ensure other participant-specific activities (e.g., support workers attending to showering, toileting, mobility, and mealtime assistance requirements), are recognised and incorporated into the daily care regime.
8. Include preventative measures to reduce the risk of developing pressure sores or further skin breakdown in the participant's care routine (e.g., regular position changes, use of special pressure relief mattresses, and skin inspection every time care is delivered for redness or discolouration).
9. Ensure participant's skin is supple by applying moisturising creams, and ensuring a nutritious diet and food supplements are provided as needed.
10. Encourage and maintain good hygiene practices and encourage participants to maintain activity levels where possible and appropriate.

Support workers are to:

1. Check and confirm consent is current for complex wound care (refer to the participant's *Complex Wound Care Support Plan*) and the participant has been regularly consulted and updated regarding their wound condition and any changes required to assist in the healing of the wound.
2. Read and understand the *Complex Wound Care Support Plan* and perform duties and procedures only within scope of practice.

3. Ensure the participant's privacy and dignity, as well as a safe environment, prior to commencing support.
4. Communicate with participant as per their preferred communication method e.g., use of devices, aides, or language resources as needed, e.g., picture cards.
5. Check whether participant has any specific factors or adjustments needed at the time of support being provided.
6. Follow strict personal hygiene and infection control procedures before and after attending to dressing of wounds, including the appropriate PPE.
7. Check the required equipment and dressings are available and ready for use.
8. If required, provide prescribed pain medication before and/or after dressing the wound (refer to participant's *Medication Chart*). Report and manage pain before, during, and after wound dressing changes, where indicated.
9. Adhere to strict infection control strategies including aseptic techniques during open wound care.
10. Take wound images to assist with tracking wound healing (ensuring to obtain the participant's consent). Wound images are to be taken each time the dressing is changed. Keep images in the participant's progress notes.
11. Undertake required blood tests, wound swabs, and tissue samples in consultation with the health practitioner, dependent on the type of wound.
12. Apply the prescribed topical wound medication if the wound is infected.
13. Maintain the participant's personal hygiene and skin integrity at all times.
14. Report immediately to the Registered Nurse if the wound smells, there is pus or blood present, the wound is a different colour, the wound site is excoriated, or the participant is experiencing fever or chills. If appropriate, refer to the participant's health practitioner for medical review and treatment.
15. Should an incident occur, respond as per the participant's *Complex Wound Care Support Plan*, and per Australian Quality Care's *participant Incident Management Policy and Procedure*. Following the incident, ensure the participant's *Complex Wound Care Support Plan* is reviewed and updated, and information is communicated to all staff involved in the complex wound care support.
16. Maintain detailed documentation in the participant's health records and associated assessment charts.
17. Keep the participant's *Complex Wound Care Support Plan* updated.
18. Actively involve the participant in complex wound care support to the extent they choose, check any changes to support they are receiving and any other areas where the *Complex Wound Care Support Plan* is not meeting participant needs.
19. Encourage feedback from the participant and request changes from attending health professionals to their *Complex Wound Care Support Plan* as required.
20. Identify, document, and report information where *Complex Wound Care Support Plans* are not meeting participants' needs.
21. Undertake on-going training and education, maintain up to date First Aid knowledge, and participate in regular competency assessments to ensure practices are safe and up to date with current best-practice guidelines for supporting participants with complex wound care.

Supporting documents

Procedural guidelines for complex wound care support are covered in the following documents for support workers and can be used for participants' reference where complex wound care is provided.

Documents relevant to this policy and procedure include:

- *Medication Management Policy and Procedure*
- *Infection Control Policy and Procedure*
- *Waste Management Policy and Procedure*
- *participant Incident Management Policy and Procedure*
- *Feedback and Complaints Policy and Procedure*
- *Appendix 1 – Factors that Impair Wound Healing*
- *Appendix 2 – Pressure Ulcer Management Program*
- *Appendix 3 – Skin Tear Management*
- *Appendix 4 – Pressure Area Management*
- *Appendix 5 – Selection of Wound Dressing Products*
- *Appendix 6 – Wound Treatment Guide*
- *Appendix 7 – Incident Report Guide*
- *Complex Wound Care Support Plan*
- *Complex Wound Location and Evaluation Charts*
- *Service Agreements*
- *Staff Training Plans*
- *Staff Performance Reviews*
- *Complex Wound Care Competency Assessment*
- *Incident Forms*
- *Continuous Improvement Plan*

References

- *Australian Medicines Handbook*, Australian Medicines Handbook Pty Ltd, last modified July 2022
- *Clinical Guidelines (Nursing) Wound Assessment and Management*, The Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne, March 2019
- *Wound Assessment and Management - South Eastern Sydney Local Health District (February 2022)*
- *NDIS Practice Standards: High Intensity Support Skills Descriptors – Guidance for NDIS Providers and Auditors*, NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission, November 2022
- NCA NATFRAME Residential Care services Skin Integrity Assessment
- NCA NATFRAME Residential Care Services Wound Assessment
- NCA NATFRAME Braden Risk Assessment Scale
- NCA NATFRAME Residential Services Wound Progress Chart

Monitoring and review

This Policy and Procedure will be reviewed by the Board annually, or sooner if changes in legislation occur or new best practice evidence becomes available. Reviews will incorporate staff, participant, and other stakeholder feedback, and identified continuous improvement as relevant.

Review of procedures will assess if the implementation is efficient, effective, and able to be actioned.

Australian Quality Care's *Continuous Improvement Plan* will be used to record improvements identified and monitor the progress of their implementation. Where relevant, this information will be considered as part of Australian Quality Care's future service planning and delivery processes.

Document Control

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