



# PREVENTING SKIN INFECTIONS

**How you can help the family**

*a health worker resource*

# Hygiene

## Key messages to tell the family

### Do:

- ✓ Use soap.
- ✓ Wash hands often.
- ✓ Take a daily bath or shower.
- ✓ Keep fingernails short and clean.
- ✓ Keep the house free of rubbish inside and out.
- ✓ Keep the house clean, vacuum regularly. Use washing detergent and household bleach on surfaces.
- ✓ Regularly wash and air bedding.

### Stop infections spreading to other people:

- ✓ Don't share personal items, such as towels, bedding, dirty clothes, hats, hairbrushes, lip balm and drink bottles.
- ✓ Don't swim or play contact games until sores have healed.

## Checklist

### The family will need:

- Beds and mattresses, duvets, pillows.
- Sheets, pillowcases, duvet covers (enough to wash and dry regularly).
- Face cloths, hand towels, bath towels (enough to wash and dry regularly).
- Clean clothes (enough to change every day).
- Soap or soap substitute.
- Bleach, dish wash detergent.
- Washing machine.
- Vacuum cleaner.
- Plasters/plaster strip/scissors.

*Check if the family could get help through Work and Income for the items listed here. Work and Income provide assistance for families with skin infections if they meet income requirements – refer useful contacts on back page.*

# Insect bite prevention

## Head lice treatment

- *If possible treat with pharmacy head lice treatment to kill live lice first. Sometimes a number of treatments are required especially if lice are again caught from others in the home or from other contacts.*
- *Coat hair in low cost conditioner and comb remaining lice out using a long fine-toothed metal lice comb.*
- *Rinse out the conditioner.*
- *Rinsing the hair with vinegar and re-combing can get the eggs out more easily.*
- *Repeat the conditioning process every few days to remove newly hatched lice.*
- *Brush hair often. Wear long hair up or plaited to reduce the chance of getting lice again.*

## Scabies treatment

- *Treat everyone in the family and their close contacts with scabies cream at the same time.*
- *Scabies may be resistant to the first cream tried. Be persistent and try other treatments. The itch may remain for a few weeks even after successful treatment.*
- *Put on clean clothes and change bedding after treatment.*
- *Wash and air items in usual way.*
- *See the doctor if not getting better.*

## Key messages to tell the family

- ✓ Stop the itching as this can lead to infection. Ask a pharmacist for advice if unsure what to use.
- ✓ Keep doors and windows closed in the evening when lights are on.
- ✓ Use insect repellent.
- ✓ Keep pets preferably outside, and definitely out of bedrooms.
- ✓ Vacuum carpets regularly.
- ✓ Treat flea infestations with insecticide spray and vacuuming. Use pest control services for large pest infestations.
- ✓ Wash bites regularly.

## Checklist

- Pets are de-fleaed and kept out of bedrooms.
- Sources of stagnant water are removed, including toys or containers outside that could hold water.
- Food is kept off benches and the kitchen is kept clean to reduce flies.
- Rubbish is removed inside and out regularly to reduce pests.
- Does the family need non-prescription treatments for headlice or scabies?
- Does the family need pest eradication products or information?
- Is the family eligible for Work and Income assistance for any of the required items?

# Wound care

## Key messages to tell the family

- ✓ Wash wounds/bites in warm water.
- ✓ Keep wounds covered.
- ✓ Check wounds and change plasters regularly.
- ✓ Wash wounds and cover before going to bed.
- ✓ Wash hands regularly especially before and after treating wounds.
- ✓ Visit the doctor early – get treatment for an infection quickly!
- ✓ Avoid scratching bites and sores.
- ✓ Keep fingers out of nose!

## Further information

### Useful websites

[www.rph.org.nz](http://www.rph.org.nz) (go to *Healthy Communities, Healthy Skin* link)

[www.dermnetnz.org](http://www.dermnetnz.org)

[www.workandincome.govt.nz](http://www.workandincome.govt.nz)

### Useful contacts

**Regional Public Health** 04 570 9002 for skin infection information and resources, including the 'Health worker guide to Work and Income referrals'.

**Work and Income** 0800 559 009

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Better Health For The Greater Wellington Region

