

Is your patient able to self-manage?

For patients with chronic wounds, it is crucial, now more than ever, that they engage in their care. Self-care can offer a means to maintain or even improve the capacity to live well over time.



Patients need to be:



Willing



Health literate



At the centre of your decision making and care delivery



Supported

1. Physical and mental ability

Can the patient physically reach the wound to manage dressing changes?

Can they understand their treatment and care?

Are they mentally and physically able to self-care?

Will they be able to monitor for signs of infection and other problems?

2. Support/situation

Are they dependent on carers or family for care delivery?

Are there financial constraints which might form a barrier?

3. Motivation

Do they understand why self-care will help them?

Are they willing and ready to carry out self-care?

Have they had any negative experiences in the past which might influence how well they cope?

Promoting self-care can **empower patients** and **reduce nursing workloads**. Patients should never feel abandoned but should have support available as needed.



Tips for helping your patient to self-manage

With thanks to the **National Wound Care Strategy Programme**, who have prepared information for patients on self-care.

If you and your patient have agreed together that they are able to self-care, these tips will help you to explain to your patient how to care for their wound and when to seek help.

Ensure that your patient understands which dressings to use and how often to change them. It is important that patients know where and how to access additional dressings.

Explain to your patient the process of changing a dressing using these key points:

1. Getting ready to change a dressing

Gather your equipment and place it on a table which has been cleaned with sanitising wipes or washing up liquid.

Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water and dry carefully.

2. Removing the old dressing

Take your time removing your dressing. Most of our dressings can be removed safely by gently & slowly peeling from the corners.

Try to remove it without touching the wound or the part of the dressing which has been in contact with the wound.

If it the dressing is stuck to your wound you can soak it in water and wait for it to loosen.

Place the dirty dressing immediately into a waste bag and then wash your hands.

3. Cleaning your wound

Before you put your new dressing on, you need to gently clean your wound.

If possible, wear sterile gloves for this.

If you are able, you can clean the wound itself with tap water and gauze, starting from the middle and working out.

Use fresh, clean gauze and water to clean the area around your wound.

Dry the skin carefully.

4. Applying the new dressing

Your new dressing will have instructions on the pack on how to apply it.

Follow these and any other guidance you have been given about applying any creams or tapes.

Don't forget to seal the rubbish bag and dispose of it according to the advice you have been given.

Finally, wash your hands.

Looking out for problems

Make sure that your patient knows what to look for and when to ask for more help. This should include advising the patient on the signs and symptoms which mean they need to call and ask for advice. These might include unusual wound leakage, pain or smell, the wound increasing in size, redness around the wound which is increasing or generally feeling unwell. Patients can be advised to photograph their wound to measure its progress.

Always make sure that support systems are in place and that your patient knows where to go to ask questions or seek further support. This includes making sure that the patient has contacts for accessing dressings and supplies as well as knowing how and when to call NHS 111.