

## --- GSIL's Health and Wellness Tip for August 2014 ---

### Health and Wellness Tip Skin care:

Did you know that your skin is your largest organ? It shields the body's vital metabolic functions from harmful temperatures, chemicals, and bacteria. One small nick or abrasion can lead to infections called "Cellulitis". This is an infection of the skin, which can spread to your blood stream if not treated. Certain disease processes affect the ability of your skin to heal or protect to the rest of your body. Diabetes is the main disease that impairs our body's ability to heal itself and it also affects our ability to feel pressure or pain. A SCI may affect your ability to feel the presence of a cut or itch of a rash. Another process that affects our skin is normal aging.

As we age, our skin naturally becomes thinner and dryer. If it becomes too dry, it can become prone to cracking and dermatitis, which allows bacteria to come in, possibly resulting in infection. We should all do what we can to protect our skin. Some things that we can do on a regular basis are:

- Avoid hot baths and showers
- Skin must be clean and dry. Make sure creases, folds and between the toes are dry after bathing or on hot humid days.
- Use only mild soaps and gently apply moisturizers after every shower or bath
- Not smoke or quit smoking
- Do not expose your skin to the sun without sunblock.
- Keep properly hydrated by drinking more liquids. Don't rely on thirst to tell you to drink! Good nutrition is also key to good skin integrity.
- Use a room humidifier in the winter

You should also check your skin daily for rashes, small cuts or nicks, the start of pressure sores. If you can't "see" all of your skin ask a family member or your ACW to check for you. If you have a disease or injury that affects your ability to feel sensation, you may not know that you have a rash, or cut, or even a thumbtack in the bottom of your foot. Also you or a caregiver, whoever is familiar with your skin, may notice a change in color or shape of a mole. That should be reported to a health care provider as soon as possible.

If you have a break in your skin, whether it's from a rash or cut, clean with soap and water and dry carefully. Monitor it twice a day. If you see redness around the area or drainage with a foul odor contact your home health nurse or physician as soon as possible. The sooner a problem with your skin is treated the better.