

Statement regarding prescribing of sterile dressing packs in Primary Care

The Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin ICB prescribing spend on sterile dressing packs for the period of January - December 2024 was £41,626 with 5569 packs prescribed on FP10 prescriptions at NHS expense. **Generally, sterile dressing packs should not be prescribed on FP10 prescription.**

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/cg139> states that gloves must be worn for contact with non-intact skin. Gloves used for clinical interventions should be single-use items and must not be made of polythene, as they are not “CE marked”. This is because they do not meet EU standards and do not provide sufficient protection against microorganisms. A disposable apron should be worn if there is a risk that clothing may be exposed to blood, body fluids, secretions or excretions. It is important to ensure that the single-use items are disposed of correctly. Patients have the right to expect that those providing their care follow the correct procedures to minimise the risk of healthcare-associated infection. There is no requirement for the items used for any skin contact procedures to be sterile.

Infection control guidance ([NICE QS61](#) and [Public Health England](#)) advises that clean technique is needed for the treatment of most wounds. A clean technique is carried out using the same principles as an aseptic technique, but where sterile equipment is not needed. Clean techniques are used in the management of most chronic wounds. Aseptic techniques should only be required where sterility is needed.

Clinicians should make an appropriate assessment of the individual patient and the surrounding environment to decide if an aseptic technique using a sterile dressing pack is required or if a non-touch technique (ANTT) in a clean environment is sufficient.

Considerations for which technique (clean or sterile) to use may include:

- Patient factors, immune status, acute versus chronic wound.
- Type, location and depth of wound.
- Invasiveness of wound care procedure.

Suggested dressing technique for the management of chronic wound

Intervention	Handwashing	Gloves
Wound Cleansing	Yes	Clean
Routine dressing change without debridement	Yes	Clean
Dressing change with mechanical, chemical or enzymatic debridement	Yes	Clean
Dressing change with sharp conservative bedside debridement (Podiatry Only)	Yes	Sterile
Dressing changes involving Topical Negative Pressure Therapy	Yes	Sterile

Ordering/Procurement Process

District Nurse Teams

Where a sterile dressing pack is required as part of a domiciliary visit the district nursing team should use packs obtained from stock through their own organisation.

GP Practices

When it has been determined that a sterile environment is needed for a procedure in a GP practice then one should be used from practice stock. Instances when a patient is self-managing a significant wound may be a situation where the GP would need to prescribe a dressing pack via FP10.

Care Homes

Nursing homes are expected to provide any equipment that is necessary for the care of their general client population. A nursing home would be required to have a stock of basic wound care packs to carry out tissue viability interventions and wound management when required.

If the patient is housebound or in a residential care home (non-nursing), the post-op dressing request should be made through the Community Nurse Team at SCHAT via the AMCARE direct ordering system.

If the patient is not housebound or is in a nursing care home, the GP practice is responsible for the dressing request, which must be supported by the practice. Even though nursing home residents are cared for by in-house nurses, their dressing requests still go through the GP practice.

The [Health and Social Care Act 2008 \(Regulated Activities\) Regulation 2014](#) states in regulation 12 [Safe Care and Treatment](#) (2)(f) "Sufficient equipment and/or medical devices that are necessary to meet people's needs should be available at all times and devices should be kept in full working order. They should be available when needed and within a reasonable time without posing a risk.". The Care Home would be required to have stock of basic wound care packs as part of regulation 12 to carry out tissue viability interventions and wound management when required.

References

- <https://www.prescgipp.info/media/1771/b65-wound-care-sterile-dressing-packs-21.pdf> June 2014
- <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/cg139> Infection: prevention and control of healthcare-associated infections in primary and community care, Published March 2012, updated February 2017
- Public Health England. [Infection prevention and control: resource for adult social care](#). March 2022
- [The Health and Social Care Act 2008 \(Regulated Activities\) Regulation 2014](#)

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