



STEP 5:

Care for Skin and Nails

Authors: Linda F. Lehman, Mary Jo Geyer and Laura Bolton



Step 5: Care for Skin and Nails

Introduction

The skin covers the body, keeps in body fluids and keeps out dirt and germs. The skin has nerves which allow us to feel touch, pressure and pain. It also helps us know the differences between hot and cold and smooth and rough surfaces. Nails are special parts of the skin formed by its hard outer layer to protect the tips of the fingers and toes. Healthy skin and nails can enhance the body's natural beauty, the image we present to the outside world. However, the skin can be damaged by the sun, physical injury (e.g. blisters, cracks, tears or burns) and/or chemical injury (e.g. pesticides or strong soap). Proper skin care keeps the skin clean, soft and flexible. The nails can be frequently damaged by fungal infection. Keeping the nails clean and properly cut prevents injury and infection.

The first signs of health problems/illness often appear in the skin and nails. It is important to develop the daily habit of looking at and caring for the skin and nails. Therefore, good vision and lighting are essential to identify problems early and take action.

Goal

Practice good skin and nail care daily to improve appearance, protect against injury, prevent infection and preserve full joint mobility.

Key Messages

1. Look carefully at the skin and nails daily. If a problem such as a crack or wound is identified, take action to care for it and/or seek help.
2. Practice good skin and nail care, daily.
3. Arms, hands, legs and feet with loss of feeling are at high risk for injury. Take extra care to prevent damage when doing skin and nail care and protect them during the day, at work, at play and when walking.

References

- Cross, H. (2003). *Wound care for people affected by leprosy: A guide for low resource situations*. Greenville, S.C.: American Leprosy Missions.
- Dreyer, G., et al. (2002). *Basic lymphoedema management: Treatment and prevention of problems associated with lymphatic filariasis*. Hollis, N.H.: Hollis Pub.
- <http://orthoinfo.aaos.org/topic.cfm?topic=a00154>
- http://www.who.int/lymphatic_filariasis/resources/training/en
- *I can do it myself: Tips for people affected by leprosy who want to prevent disability*. (2007). New Delhi: WHO Regional Office for South-East Asia. http://www.searo.who.int/entity/global_leprosy_programme/publications/prevention_disability.pdf
- *Morbidity management and disability prevention in lymphatic filariasis*. (2013) http://apps.searo.who.int/pds_docs/B4990.pdf



A Quick Supervisory Checklist for Step 5

Care for Skin and Nails	Yes	No	Not Obs	Observations & Recommendations
1. Feels and observes skin and nail conditions in adequate lighting				
2. Identifies skin and nail problem and takes action				
3. Demonstrates good skin care and nail care				
4. Identifies skin areas with sensory loss				
Teaches affected person and caregiver how to:				
5. Do daily self-care of skin and nails				
6. Protect skin which has sensory loss				

Guidelines for Teaching the Module

Health Coach/Facilitator should use the local language and ensure that all terms are found in the local language.

Estimated time for teaching the task: 2-3 hours

Learning Objectives

At the end of the module, participants will be able to:

1. Explain and demonstrate healthy skin and nail care practices.
2. Identify common skin and nail problems which are listed on the handout *5.2 Individual Impairment Record Form (IIRF) – Skin and Nail Section*.
3. Describe how skin and nail problems can be treated at the community level and when they need to be referred.

List of Teaching Activities and Learning Materials

Activity 1

Skin and Nail Screen

Activity 2

Preventive Actions for Healthy Skin and Nails

Activity 3

Discussion and Demonstration on Community-Based Skin and Nail Care and When to Refer

Handouts

- 5.1 Instructions for Skin and Nail Screen
- 5.2 Individual Impairment Record Form (IIRF) – Skin and Nail Section
- 5.3 Preventive Actions for Healthy Skin and Nails
- 5.4 Community-Based Skin and Nail Care or Referral
- 5.5 Techniques for Skin and Nail Care (table with pictures)

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Activity 1: Skin and Nail Screen

Handouts

- 5.1 Instructions for Skin and Nail Screen
- 5.2 Individual Impairment Record Form (IIRF) – Skin and Nail Section

Equipment & Materials

- Flip chart stand and paper
- 4 – 6 colored markers
- Sensory testing devices:
 - Cotton
 - Feather
 - Hot/cold tubes or ether
 - Pen
 - Nylon monofilament (10g)
 - Finger
- Copies of 5.1 IIRF-Skin and Nail Screen forms
- Blue or black pen
- Red pen

Instructions for Teaching the Activity

Room Arrangement: Participants sit in a semicircle with Health Coach and volunteer seated in the front.

- 1. Health Coach distributes handouts**
5.1 Instructions for Skin and Nail Screen and 5.2 Individual Impairment Record Form (IIRF) – Skin and Nail Section
- 2. Health Coach asks for a volunteer.**
- 3. Health Coach explains and demonstrates on the volunteer how to do the Skin and Nail Screen and how to record the results.**
- 4. Health Coach divides the group into pairs.**
- 5. The pairs practice doing the Skin and Nail Screen on each other and recording the results. The Health Coach observes and provides feedback on their screening and recording techniques.**

Note: The following problems put the person at risk for additional complications.

- *The loss of feeling to hands and feet puts them at high risk for injury. Extra care and good vision are needed to prevent damage when doing skin and nail care.*
- *A serious arterial problem may exist if one foot feels colder when compared to the other foot. The person should be referred immediately to the nearest reference center for further evaluation. Until further evaluation is completed, protect the cold foot from injury, do not walk on the foot and use a mobility aid such as a cane, crutches, walker, etc.*



Activity 2: Preventive Actions for Healthy Skin and Nails

Handouts

- 5.3 Preventive Actions for Healthy Skin and Nails

Equipment & Materials

- Flip chart stand and paper
- 4 – 6 colored markers
- 7 sheets of A4 blank paper per group
- One colored marker per group

Instructions for Teaching the Activity

Room Arrangement: Participants are divided into small groups with three to four persons per group.

- 1. Health Coach writes the following seven categories on the flip chart:**
 - Good personal hygiene
 - Moisturizing the skin and scars
 - Removing callus
 - Trimming nails
 - Good environmental hygiene
 - Healthy eating
 - Protecting skin and nails
- 2. Health Coach explains that they will be making recommendations for preventive actions for skin and nail health that fall into these seven categories.**
- 3. Groups are given 20 minutes to discuss and make recommendations for each category. Each group records their recommendations for the seven categories on separate sheets of paper.**
- 4. After 20 minutes, the Health Coach asks for a volunteer to record the group's recommendations for each of the seven categories on the flip chart.**
- 5. Health Coach begins the discussion with the first category, Good Personal Hygiene, and asks for one group to report. Other groups add recommendations without repeating recommendations noted from the previous groups.**
- 6. The groups continue to present recommendations for the remaining categories until all recommendations have been presented.**
- 7. The Health Coach distributes the handout *5.3 Preventive Actions for Healthy Skin and Nails*.**
- 8. The entire group reviews the handout and adds any missing preventive actions on the flip chart.**

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Activity 3: Discussion and Demonstration on Community-Based Skin and Nail Care and When to Refer

Handouts

- 5.2 Individual Impairment Record Form (IIRF) – Skin and Nail Section
- 5.4 Community-Based Skin and Nail Care or Referral
- 5.5 Techniques for Skin and Nail Care (table with pictures)

Supplemental handouts:

- 3.2 Good Washing and Drying of the Body
- 3.3 Good Individual and Household Cleanliness Practices

Equipment & Materials

- Flip chart stand and paper
- 4 – 6 colored markers
- 1 pen
- 5 sheets of A4 blank paper
- 1 bucket with clean water
- 1 basin with plastic liner
- 1 plastic dropcloth to place under the basin
- 1 plastic bag to dispose of contaminated material
- 2 sheets of No. 80 wet/dry sandpaper
- 2 sheets of No. 100 wet/dry sandpaper
- 1 pumice stone
- 5-7 thin cotton washing & drying cloths
- 1 small container of moisturizing cream (local is best i.e. shea butter, cacao butter, etc.)
- 2 tongue blades (use to remove moisturizer from container)
- 1 toenail clipper
- 1 sheet of EVA or microcellular rubber (0.5 meter x 0.5 meter x 3/4mm thickness)
- 1 sheet of EVA or microcellular rubber (0.5 meter x 0.5 meter x 1cm thickness)
- 1 sheet of “furniture or bedding foam” (0.5 meter x 0.5 meter x 1cm thickness)
- 1.5 meters of cotton cloth
- 1 cane
- 1 pair of crutches
- 1 cutlass or fufu pounder

Instructions for Teaching the Activity

Room Arrangement: Participants sit in a semicircle.

- 1. Health Coach distributes handout and reviews problems that are identified by the handout *5.2 IIRF-Skin and Nail Section* and explains appropriate community-based care and referral found in handout *5.4 Community-Based Skin and Nail Care or Referral*.**
- 2. Health Coach and participants discuss community-based care recommendations and issues related to referral.**
- 3. Health Coach distributes handout *5.5 Techniques for Skin and Nail Care (table with pictures)* and demonstrates how to do the following:**
 - Soak and hydrate skin
 - Rub/scrape callus and skin cracks
 - Trim nails
 - Care for scars
 - Check footwear size and choose appropriate footwear
 - Adapt common work tools
 - Use mobility aids (cane/stick, crutches)



Conclusion

In conclusion, the Health Coach summarizes key messages and clarifies any misconceptions.

Handout 5.1: Instructions for Skin and Nail Screen

Preparation for skin and nail screen:

Gather together equipment and supplies: sensory test device(s), IIRF form, red pen and blue/black pen or pencil. Wash hands with soap and water before and after each screen.

Complaints	Ask
Patient or family complaints or observations	Do you currently have any of the following skin or nail complaints: Itching, burning, tingling, pins and needles, numbness, feels like ants crawling, feels heavy, feels cold or hot, pain? If yes, what symptom(s)? Record on IIRF form: Circle symptom(s), Yes, R and/or L
History	Ask
Previous skin injury (scar) or problem	Have you ever had an injury or problem with your skin? If yes, where and what kind of injury or problem? Record on IIRF form: Circle Yes, R and/or L and type of injury/problem. Mark location on body chart.
Previous nail injury or problem	Have you ever had an injury or problem with your nails? If yes, what kind of injury or problem? Record on IIRF form: Circle Yes, R and/or L and type of injury/problem.
Skin and Nail Conditions	Observe, feel and ask
Swelling in arm(s), leg(s), eye(s)/ face, scrotum, other	Do you have any swelling? Observe to identify swelling (compare sides). Record on IIRF form: Circle Yes, R and/or L. Mark on body chart.
Skin Lesions: nodule, lump, bump, patch, thick infiltrated	Do you have any nodule(s), lump(s), bump(s), knob(s) or patches? Observe to identify skin lesions. Record on IIRF form: Circle sign(s), Yes, R and/or L. Mark on body chart.
Can't feel touch or temperature	Choose device for testing touch. Lightly touch person in area with sensation to demonstrate test. Ask them to respond, "yes" when they feel the touch. Ask person to close eyes. Lightly touch each selected area with device three times. If not felt two out of three times, record as loss of feeling. Record on IIRF form: Circle device used, Yes, R and/or L for: skin patch, tip of thumb, tip of little finger, great toe.
Cold foot	Feel and compare temperature of each foot. Identify if one foot is cold in comparison to the other. Record on IIRF form: Circle Yes, R and/or L.
Nail problems	Look at fingernails and toenails. Identify if too long, ingrown, thick, thin, brittle or discolored. Record on IIRF form: Circle condition(s), Yes, R and/or L
Very dry skin and/or skin cracks	Do you have dry skin or skin cracks? Identify areas of dry skin and/or cracks. Record on IIRF form: Circle condition(s), Yes, R and/or L. Mark cracks as wounds on body chart.
Scar problems	Do you have a scar that is dry, cracked or limiting motion? Record on IIRF form: Circle condition(s) Yes, R and/or L
Thick hand callus	Look at palms of hands to identify areas with thick callus. Record on IIRF form: Circle Yes, R and/or L
Thick foot callus on bottom of foot	Look at bottom of feet to identify areas with thick callus. Record on IIRF form: Circle Yes, R and/or L

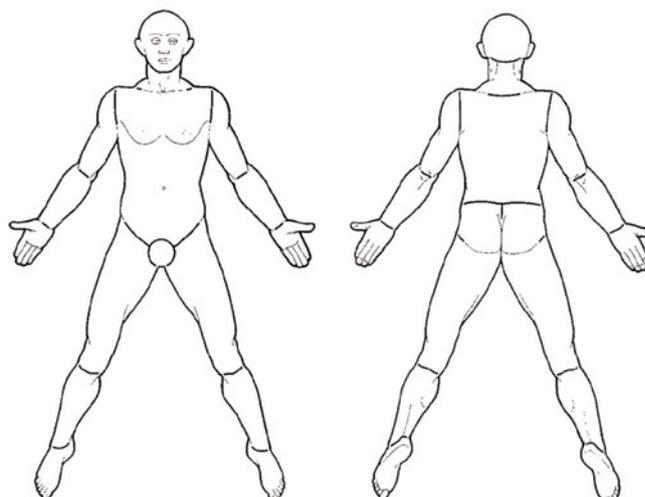
Handout 5.2: Individual Impairment Record Form (IIRF) – Skin and Nail Section

(See Handout 5.1 for instructions on how to do skin and nail screen)

Complaints:			
Pain, itching, burning, tingling, pins and needles, numbness, feels like ants crawling, feels heavy, feels cold or hot, skin feels leathery, hard	Yes	R	L
History:			
Previous skin injury or problem. Type: _____	Yes	R	L
Previous nail injury or problem. Type: _____	Yes	R	L
Skin and nail conditions: (circle area, test or condition that applies)			
Swelling in arm(s), leg(s), eye/face, scrotum, other: _____	Yes	R	L
Skin lesions: Nodule, lump, bump, knob, patch, thick infiltrated, other	Yes	R	L
Can't feel touch and/or temperature. Write below what device was used when sensation was not felt: cotton, feather, finger, pen, 10g filament, ether, hot/cold tubes, other (name)			
• Skin patch on body. Did not feel: _____	Yes	R	L
• Tip of thumb. Did not feel: _____	Yes	R	L
• Tip of little finger. Did not feel: _____	Yes	R	L
• Great toe. Did not feel: _____	Yes	R	L
One foot is cold compared to the other	Yes	R	L
Nail problems: too long, ingrown, thick or thin, brittle or discolored	Yes	R	L
Very dry skin and/or skin cracks	Yes	R	L
Scar problems: dry, cracked, thick and/or limiting motion	Yes	R	L
Thick callus on hand	Yes	R	L
Thick callus on bottom of foot	Yes	R	L

Key for Recording	
Skin Lesion	
Crack	
Wound	
Scar Location	
Joint with Movement Limitations	
Swelling	
Location of Amputation	

Body Map



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Handout 5.3: Preventive Actions for Healthy Skin and Nails

Preventive Actions	Details
1. Practice good personal hygiene	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use good washing and drying of the body, personal clothing and bedding. • Look and feel for skin and nail problems daily. • Remind persons with loss of sensation to check footwear for hard or sharp objects. • If limited feeling, vision and/or movement, ask for help.
2. Moisturize the skin and scars	<p>Moisturizing skin prevents dryness, soothes (decreases itching) and keeps skin/scar soft and flexible. Soft, flexible skin resists injury.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use local products for moisturizing: e.g., shea butter, coconut oil, cocoa butter, palm oil, mineral oil. • The best time for moisturizing is after bathing or soaking the dry areas. • Rub the moisturizer into the skin/scar slowly, avoiding areas between toes and skin folds. • Massage and gently stretch skin/joints through their full range of motion.
3. Remove calluses	<p>A callus builds up over areas of high pressure. In persons with a loss of feeling in the hand/foot, a thick callus can cause skin breakdown and should be removed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After washing, soak hands/feet in clean water until the skin is soft. • As skin softens, rub/scrape off callus with abrasive object; e.g., wet/dry sandpaper, rough stones, files. • Adapt work tools and footwear to reduce pressure and friction.
4. Trim nails	<p>Nails must be trimmed to keep from turning under and/or growing into the skin.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use clean nail clippers to cut straight across the nail. • File any rough/sharp edges with sandpaper or file.
5. Practice good personal and household cleanliness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construct, use and maintain latrines and refuse pits. Dispose of rubbish and feces. • Keep livestock away from house to reduce flies. • Clear overgrown brush near home and eliminate standing water to reduce insects and other pests. • See also handout <i>3.3 Good Individual and Household Behaviors</i>.
6. Eat healthy foods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grow and eat dark green leafy vegetables, dark yellow and orange vegetables and fruits. • Eat, as often as possible, foods high in protein (nuts, beans, eggs, fish, meat, milk, etc.) and use natural oils (coconut, olive, etc.).
7. Protect skin and nails	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid the sun during the hottest time of the day. Rest in the shade. • Protect skin/scars from the sun by wearing a wide-brimmed hat, long sleeves and pants especially if you have skin problems (scars, wounds, etc.) and/or are taking certain medication. • Wear protective gloves and footwear to avoid injury and disease (burns, cuts, infection, worms).



Handout 5.4: Community-Based Skin and Nail Care or Referral

Problems Identified by Skin and Nail Screen *	Community-Based Care (self-care and/or assisted care)	Contact Supervisor and Refer for Clinical Exam, Diagnosis or Other
1. Skin lesion(s): nodule, lump, bump, knob, patch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practice good personal hygiene. 	Refer as soon as possible .
2. Skin dryness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> After daily bathing or soaking, moisturize to prevent dryness using local products. Protect hands when using harsh soaps, chemicals, hot water, etc. 	If dryness does not improve with good moisturizing practices after one month , refer.
3. Skin cracks from dryness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Soak and moisturize daily, cover with plastic wrap for 15 minutes, then gently scrape. Scrape in parallel with line of the crack. Wear footwear. 	If dryness does not improve with good moisturizing practices after one month , refer.
4. Cracks from wet skin between the fingers, toes or in skin folds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wash daily with soap and water. Dry carefully between toes, fingers and in skin folds. Talk to supervisor about use of antiseptic or antifungal cream. Follow clinical treatment instructions. 	If not improved within one week , refer.
5. Long nails	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wash with soap and water and soak until nail is softer. Trim straight across the nail and file off all rough/sharp edges. If limited feeling, vision and/or movement, ask for help. 	If the nail is too thick to cut, refer as possible for trimming with better tools.
6. Ingrown toenails	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wash feet daily with soap and water. Check that shoe length is not too short. 	Refer as soon as possible for clinical exam and excision.
7. Thick, thin, brittle or discolored nails	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practice healthy eating and good hygiene. Follow clinical treatment instructions. 	Refer as soon as possible for clinical exam and treatment.
8. Callus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Soak until the callus is soft. Then rub/scrape off callus and moisturize. Adapt work tools and footwear to reduce pressure and friction and encourage their use. 	If not improved within two to four weeks , refer for more aggressive callus removal and more advanced methods for reducing pressure and friction.

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Handout 5.4: Community-Based Skin and Nail Care or Referral (continued)

Problems Identified by Skin and Nail Screen *	Community-Based Care (self-care and/or assisted care)	Contact Supervisor and Refer for Clinical Exam, Diagnosis or Other
9. Scars	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soak and moisturize daily, cover with plastic wrap 15 minutes. • Massage to free the scar. • Move and stretch the area affected by the scar. • Protect from sun and injury. 	<p>If no improvements with good community care in one to two months, refer.</p> <p>If deep cracking or further loss of motion occurs, refer as soon as possible.</p>
10. Swelling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice good personal hygiene. • Elevate as much as possible day and night unless elevation causes pain. • Do pumping exercise frequently. 	<p>If pain or swelling increases, refer immediately.</p>
11. Cold foot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rest and protect until seen by the referral center. • Do not walk on cold foot, use a mobility aid. 	<p>Urgent, refer immediately.</p>
12. Loss of feeling*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice good personal hygiene and self-care. • Protect from injury. • Adapt work tools and footwear to reduce pressure and friction and encourage their use. 	<p>If recent loss of feeling in skin patch, hands or feet, refer as soon as possible.</p>

* Do the "Number Recognition on Bottom of Foot Test" to see if vision and movement is adequate to look at skin and nails on the foot and to do self-care. Test by doing the following:

- Write a 2-3cm number with a black pen on the bottom of the foot, over the bone just below the base of the great toe.
- Ask the person to look at the number on the sole of the foot and tell the number they see.
- If unable to see the number due to poor vision or mobility, a helper or family member should check the skin daily and do foot and toenail care.



Handout 5.5: Techniques for Skin and Nail Care

Preventive Actions

1. Observe skin, hands, feet and footwear daily.
2. Wash and dry in between fingers, toes and skin folds.
3. Moisturize dry skin and scars.
4. Remove calluses.
5. Protect skin and nails.
6. Keep nails trimmed.
 - Cut nails straight across, not too short.
 - Avoid cutting into the corners of toenails. If you do notice an ingrown toenail, seek help as it can lead to infections.
 - Use a nail file to smooth the nail.
 - After cutting and filing, check each toe to ensure you've not cut or bruised yourself. If you cut or injure yourself, seek medical help immediately.

Details

Identify problem early



Keep clean



Moisturize



Remove callus



Protect



Photos: Linda Lehman