

STAR Skin Tear Classification System Guidelines

1. Control bleeding and clean the wound according to protocol.
2. Realign (if possible) any skin or flap.
3. Assess degree of tissue loss and skin or flap colour using the STAR Classification System.
4. Assess the surrounding skin condition for fragility, swelling, discolouration or bruising.
5. Assess the person, their wound and their healing environment as per protocol.
6. If skin or flap colour is pale, dusky or darkened reassess in 24-48 hours or at the first dressing change.

STAR Classification System



Category 1a

A skin tear where the edges **can** be realigned to the normal anatomical position (without undue stretching) and the skin or flap colour **is not** pale, dusky or darkened.



Category 1b

A skin tear where the edges **can** be realigned to the normal anatomical position (without undue stretching) and the skin or flap colour **is** pale, dusky or darkened.



Category 2a

A skin tear where the edges **cannot** be realigned to the normal anatomical position and the skin or flap colour **is not** pale, dusky or darkened.



Category 2b

A skin tear where the edges **cannot** be realigned to the normal anatomical position and the skin or flap colour **is** pale, dusky or darkened.



Category 3

A skin tear where the skin flap is completely absent.



STAR Skin Tear Classification System Glossary

- **Skin Tear:** “a traumatic wound occurring principally on the extremities of older adults, as a result of friction alone or shearing and friction forces which separate the epidermis from the dermis (partial thickness wound) or which separate both the epidermis and the dermis from underlying structures (full thickness wound)”¹.
- **Pale, dusky or darkened skin or flap colour:** when compared to the individual’s ‘normal’ surrounding skin, may indicate ischaemia or the presence of haematoma, which may affect skin or flap viability.
- **Ischaemia:** inadequate tissue perfusion as evidenced by pale, dusky or darkened tissue.
- **Haematoma:** a collection of blood or clot under the flap or realigned skin.
- **Realign:** to replace the skin or flap into the normal anatomical position without undue stretching.
- **Linear skin tear:** a skin split or the skin splitting in a straight line.
- **Flap skin tear:** a segment of skin or skin and underlying tissue that is separated from the underlying structures.

References:

- 1 Payne, R., & Martin, M. (1993). Defining and classifying skin tears: Need for a common language ... a critique and revision of the Payne-Martin Classification system for skin tears. *Ostomy Wound Management*, 39(5), 16-20.
- 2 Photographs courtesy of the Skin Tear Audit Research (STAR) photographic library, Silver Chain Nursing Association and School of Nursing and Midwifery, Curtin University of Technology.
- 3 Carville, K., Lewin, G., Newall, N., Haslehurst, P., Michael, R., Santamaria, N., & Roberts, P. (2007). STAR: A consensus for skin tear classification. *Primary Intention*, 15(1), 18-28.