

Statement regarding prescribing of sterile dressing packs in primary care

The NHS Dorset CCG primary care prescribing spend on sterile dressing packs in 2015/16 financial year was over £104,000, with 194,000 packs prescribed on FP10 prescriptions at NHS expense. Quantities of sterile dressing packs on individual patient prescriptions varied from one to 140 packs. **Generally, sterile dressing packs should not be prescribed on FP10 prescription.**

[NICE clinical guideline \(CG\) 139](#) 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 [HPA](#)) 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

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

The nursing home specification states that homes are expected to provide any equipment that is necessary for the care of their general client population. The nursing home would be required to have a stock of basic wound care packs as part of standard 16 of the specification to carry out tissue viability interventions and wound management when required.

References

[PrescQipp Bulletin 65 June 2014 June 2014](#)

[PrescQipp Briefing 65: Sterile Dressing Packs](#) January 2014

[NICE Clinical Guideline 139](#). Infection: prevention and control of healthcare-associated infections in primary and community care, Published March 2012, updated February 2017.

Health Protection Agency. Infection Control Guidelines in Community Settings. 2007

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