



Healthy Skin  
Starts with  
You!

Having spina bifida means that your child has more challenges than other children. The good news is we're here to help.

Your child may have limited feeling in his or her legs and might not be able to feel a cut or a sore. That means your child won't cry or be able to tell you he or she is hurt. Talk to your child's healthcare professional about your child's specific risks for skin problems.

Teach him or her how to care for their own skin. When your child enters school, it is time for them to begin helping with daily skin checks.

## Call your child's spina bifida clinic immediately if:

- Your child's skin color changes.
- Your child's skin turns darker and doesn't return to its normal color in 15 minutes.



*THIS PROGRAM MADE POSSIBLE THROUGH  
AN UNRESTRICTED EDUCATIONAL GRANT  
FROM SMITH & NEPHEW.*

[HTTP://SPINABIFIDAASSOCIATION.ORG/RESOURCES/DIDYOULOOK](http://spinabifidaassociation.org/resources/didyoulook)

*SUPPORTED IN PART BY CDC'S NATIONAL CENTER ON  
BIRTH DEFECTS AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES*

# Did You Look?

## Healthy Skin Starts with You!

Care for  
**School-Aged**  
Children with  
Spina Bifida





## Did You Look?

### Pressure.

Sores can develop in parts of the body that are constantly pressed or squeezed. To prevent problems related to pressure:

- Make sure your child's shoes fit correctly and are not rubbing against the skin.
- Make sure your child relieves pressure on his or her bottom "by leaning side to side or pushing their bottom off the chair every 15 minutes

A general rule is to watch areas where the bones are right under the skin and there is constant pressure like the bottom, ankles, and toes. Other places to check are:

- The skin around your child's diaper elastic--or any clothing with elastic such as socks, pants, a bathing suit, and coat sleeves.
- The skin underneath your child's braces or under the edges of a cast.
- The skin underneath snaps, zippers, buttons, or other fasteners.

### Moisture.

Your child can develop skin problems any time his or her skin gets wet and stays wet. Areas around the upper thighs and the bottom are the most common places for skin problems to develop from moisture.

For school-aged children, wetness may occur between catheterizations. If your child wears diapers at school, it is important to change diapers throughout the day. When you help with diaper changes, check your child's skin each time and encourage them to look at and feel their skin too.

### Heat.

Hot surfaces and direct sources of heat can burn your child's skin. Since your child may have limited feeling in his or her legs, they may not be able to feel their skin burning and tell you they're hurt.

Watch out for these other sources of heat:

- Electric blankets, heating pads
- Hot water
- Hot sand at the beach
- Direct sun/sunburn
- Car seats
- Outdoor swings/playground equipment, outdoor furniture
- Radiators, space heaters
- Indoor and outdoor fires
- Candles and holiday decorations
- Hot surfaces in the kitchen

### Friction.

Any time your child's skin comes in contact with a rough surface, your child could get cut, scraped, or bruised. To protect your child's skin:

- Make sure your child is wearing shoes when he or she walks or swims.
- Protect the skin from rough surfaces.

### Protecting Your Child's Skin

- Make sure your child changes position every 15 minutes if he or she has limited mobility or impaired sensation.
- Your child must wear braces and shoes that fit properly and do not rub against the skin.
- Your child must test surfaces for heat and roughness before sitting on them.
- Encourage your child to be active. Movement reduces pressure on the skin.
- Use only mild soap when bathing your child.
- Apply moisturizer to your child's dry skin and teach him or her to do it themselves.
- Teach him or her how to apply a barrier cream on moist areas of their skin. This can be the same cream you use for diaper rash.
- Limit your child's time in direct sunlight. Teach him or her to put on a hat, sunglasses, and protective clothing when going outdoors, and apply plenty of sunscreen.
- Change your child's clothes and sheets every time they get wet.
- Teach your child how to do skin checks. Until he or she learns to do skin checks independently, you must check daily for blisters, bruises, cracks, scrapes, redness, moisture, or areas of dry skin.