Keeping Skin Healthy: A Handbook for Community Care Workers in the Pilbara

January 2019
About this handbook

- This Keeping Skin Healthy handbook is for community care workers to support communities in Newman and the Western Desert, Pilbara.

- It is adapted from the third edition of the Recognising and Treating Skin Infections resource and adheres to the National Healthy Skin Guideline for the Prevention, Treatment and Public Health Control of Impetigo, Scabies, Crusted Scabies and Tinea for Indigenous Populations and Communities in Australia (1st edition) 2018. These guidelines are informed by key references used in remote areas for the management of skin infections including the Central Australian Rural Practitioners Association (CARPA) Standard Treatment Manual and the Kimberley Skin Infection Protocol.

- Several of the pictures and illustrations are from the Menzies School of Health Research and Lowitja Institute East Arnhem Regional Healthy Skin Project.

- Cover page artwork is from Martumili Ngurra 2009, by Kumpaya Girgaba, Jakayu Biljabu, Ngamaru Bidu, Thelma Judson, Ngalangka Nola Taylor and Jane Girgaba.

Citation:
Background

This Handbook was developed in response to the findings of four studies conducted with the Western Desert communities since 2007:

- Staying on track: Implementing the Australian Early Development Index in the Pilbara. Roz Walker (2007-2009) funded by BHP
- Aboriginal maternal health and child development program. Roz Walker (2010-2013) funded by BHP
- A PhD study titled: Revealing the public health significance of skin infections among Aboriginal children living in the Pilbara: A call to action in Western Australia. David Hendrickx (2018)
- An Honours research study: Talking skin: Attitudes and practices around skin infections, treatment options, and their clinical management in a remote region in Western Australia. Ingrid Amgarth-Duff (2016)

Acknowledgements

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- We would also like to acknowledge the generosity of Martu families and communities across the Western Desert and local health professionals and stakeholders for sharing their knowledge and experiences throughout the research studies and contributing to the development of this resource.
The purpose of this handbook

This handbook focuses on things Martu people told us would help keep skin healthy:

- Having home visits by Martu health workers to provide medicine
- Talking with families about skin infections and best treatment options
- Involving families and communities in decisions to get healthy skin for their kids.
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Why is skin so important?

- Skin is our largest organ, so we have to keep it safe!
- It protects our bodies, other organs, and our blood
- If your skin is sick, the rest of your body can get sick too
How can I keep my family’s skin healthy?

» Wash hands and face with soap
» Wash children every day
» Eat good tucker every day

Other suggestions for keeping skin healthy:

**Prevent**

» Wash towels, clothes and bedding regularly and dry in sun
» Wear shoes, long pants and long sleeves in the bush

**Care**

» Moisturise dry, cracked skin
» Cover skin sores from dirt or scratching
» Apply bush medicines

**Check**

» If skin is not getting better, talk to your community care worker or go to the clinic

If skin is not getting better, talk to your community care worker or go to the clinic.
Beat the Bugs that attack your skin!

- **Stephie the Strep bug**: I cause skin sores!
- **Scottie the Scabies Mite**: I burrow in your skin and cause scabies!
- **Mr. Steve the Staph bug**: I am Steph's cousin and I cause skin sores and boils!
- **Fred the Fungus**: I cause fungal infections like tinea!

These bugs are so tiny you can't see them, but they are very harmful.
Skin sores (Impetigo)

Skin sores happen when **Stephie the Strep bug** and **Steve the Staph bug** get into the skin through cuts and bites.

This is very common in children.

Look for:
- Yellow-brown **scabbed sores**
- Sores with **pus**
What are the stages of skin sores?

It is very important to treat skin sores (impetigo) straight away.

Skin Sore Stages

- **Hot**
  - Pus
- **Hot**
  - Scab
- **Cool**
  - Getting better, flat, dry
Skin sores that are **HOT**

**These have pus**

**These look like scabs**
Skin sores that are **COOL**

These sores are healing

Stephie and Steve bugs are dead!!
How can skin sores hurt me?

**Stephie the Strep bug** and **Steve the Staph bug** can make you very sick with:

- Boils
- Sepsis = Sick Blood
- Bone and Joint infections
- Kidney Disease
- Rheumatic Heart Disease
If these sicknesses aren’t treated properly, you might have to go to hospital.
What if I’ve got a HOT skin sore?

- Go to the clinic straight away!
- The clinic will give you medicine and tell you when and how to take it
- Your community care worker will help you with your treatment plan
What medicines treat skin sores?

A

Oral Septrin
(drink medicine)
No needles

Morning and Night for 3 days

OR

B

IM benzathine penicillin G (BPG)
A needle in the thigh

One dose straight away
What if my medicine does not work?

They might be tricky bugs!

First, make sure you took all your medicine.

Tricky bugs look the same as skin sores but sometimes a different medicine might be needed to beat them.

Talk to your community care worker or nurse if you are worried that the sores are still hot!
What if I’ve got Tricky Bugs?

The community care worker will swab to check what bug is there.

It will be important to wash the sores with soap until they find out if the bug is MRSA.

The doctor will give you new medicine when they find out what bug it is.
**Boils**

- Happen when **Steve the Staph bug** gets into a hair root or sweat pore

**Look for:**

- One or more **red lumps**
- Sometimes **fever**
- Usually on face, neck, armpits, shoulders and bottom

**Boils** are treated with oral **Septrin morning and night for five days**
How can I protect my family from skin sores and boils?

- Wash children every day
- Wash hands and face with soap and water
- Wash and dry towels, clothes and bedding often
- Wear shoes, long pants, and long sleeves in the bush
Scabies

You get scabies when Scottie the Scabies mite goes under your skin and lays eggs.

You can get scabies from other people with scabies if you touch their skin, their clothes, or the bed they sleep on.
How do I know if I’ve got Scabies?

Look for:

- **Itching**, sometimes over the whole body and more itchy at night
- **Scratches, sores** on wrists, elbows, knees, ankles and bottom, and between fingers and toes
- **Pimple-like bumps** on the hands and feet of babies and sometimes their whole body
What do I use if I’ve got **Scabies**?

Use **topical permethrin 5% (cream)** all over your body

Apply straight away and again in one week’s time
What do I do if I’ve got Scabies?

How to use the cream

1. Rub cream on **after shower**
2. Rub cream over entire body **(head to toe)**
3. No cream on the eyes, lips and mouth
4. Rub more on hands again after washing
5. Leave cream on **overnight**, wash off in the morning

Cover your whole body head to toe!
What is **Infected Scabies**?

**Infected Scabies** happens when skin that has Scabies becomes *infected* with *Stephie the Strep bug* and *Steve the Staph bug*.

*Signs that scabies could be infected:*

*Look for: Scab and Pus*
What if I’ve got **infected scabies**?

- The clinic will give you medicines for **both scabies** and **skin sores**.

**Topical Permethrin Cream for Scabies**

**Oral Septrin**

Drink medicine for **Skin Sores**
How can I protect my family against Scabies?

- Wash your hands with soap and dry them properly.
- Treat scabies straight away.
- Check and treat other family members for scabies.
Why is treating **Skin Sores and Scabies** so important?

- It makes our skin healthy so it can protect our bodies and beat the bugs!

- Kids with healthy skin are happier and do well at school
**Tinea (Ringworm)**

Fred the fungus Tinea is a common fungal infection of the skin, scalp and nails.

Fred the fungus is a different bug and needs to be treated with different medicines.

It spreads mainly between people and dogs (and cats).

It lasts a long time if you don’t go to the clinic.
How do I know if I’ve got Tinea?

Look for:
- Scaly patches on skin
- Darker and tougher skin
- Broken white or yellow nails

Remember: Fred the fungus can be anywhere!

Body tinea, Hand and thumbnail tinea, Nail tinea
What if I’ve got Tinea?

If your child or family member has tinea, go to the clinic straight away!

If Fred the Fungus is not treated, it can lead to other sickness, and you might need to go to the hospital.
What medicine is used to treat Tinea?

✔ For small patches
  - Topical miconazole (2% cream)

✔ For big rashes
  - Oral terbinafine (Lamisil pill)

- Once a day for 2 weeks
- Morning and night for 4-6 weeks
What if I’ve got Tinea of the scalp?

✓ Oral terbinafine (Lamisil pill)

› Once a day for 4 weeks

+ Antifungal shampoo (ketocconazole)

› Wash hair and scalp with this shampoo often while taking the Lamisil pill

Scalp Tinea

Photo from Dermnet [https://www.dermnetnz.org/](https://www.dermnetnz.org/), Image courtesy of DermNet NZ [https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/nz/legalcode](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/nz/legalcode)
What if I’ve got nail Tinea?

✅ Oral terbinafine (Lamisil pill)

Once a day for 4-6 weeks (fingernails)

Once a day for 12 weeks (toenails)
How can I protect my family against Tinea?

- Treat tinea straight away
- Wash your hands with soap and dry them with a clean towel
- Check other family members for tinea
- Keep dogs outside the house
- Use bush medicines
Hand, foot and mouth virus

- Happens when a virus gets into your body
- Hand, foot and mouth (HFM) virus makes it easier for the other bugs to get into your skin
- It is very common in children
- If your child has HFM once, they are unlikely to get it again
- Always go to the clinic if your child’s skin is not healthy

Look for:
- Rash in the mouth, on the hands and feet
- Fever
- Runny nose
How can I protect my kids against Hand, foot and mouth virus?

- Always wash your hands with soap after changing baby’s nappies or going to the toilet
- Wash toys that children play with
- Keep kids home from childcare or school until the rash is gone to stop other kids getting sick
Environmental health is also important!

Healthy skin needs healthy homes!

- Running water!
- Taps that work!
- Clean floors!
- A clean towel for everyone!
- Rubbish in bins and bags!
- Places to store food. Stove & fridge working!
- Washing line, pegs and basket!
Environmental health is also important!

Healthy skin needs healthy communities

Good tucker in local store

Work together to clean up rubbish in your community

Keep dogs outside homes

Have a yarn with the environmental health team about ways to make your community healthy
Keeping Skin Healthy

Keeps communities healthy and their children healthy, happy and doing well at school.
# Checklist of things to talk about

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<th>Wash hands often*</th>
<th>Wear long pants, long sleeves and shoes in bush</th>
<th>Wash body, bedding, toys and clothes and dry properly</th>
<th>Go to clinic and treat straight away</th>
<th>Keep dogs outside home</th>
<th>Contagious when hot (pus and scab)</th>
<th>Check other family members</th>
<th>Healthy homes and communities</th>
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*Especially after changing nappies and going to the toilet and before eating or preparing food*
Let’s work together to beat the bugs!

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Resources www.telethonkids.org.au/skin-guidelines

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