

# Reporting Skin Tears

## Safety Learning System

### Topic Guide

---

#### Why and when to report skin tears

The purpose of patient incident reporting is to improve the safety and quality of care. Incident data will help services to monitor patterns of incidents and plan improvements.

It is a requirement of the SA Health Patient Incident Management and Open Disclosure Policy Directive to report incidents and near misses into the Safety Learning System (SLS).

All skin tears should be reported into the SLS as soon as practicable by the staff member who discovered the skin tear.

Skin tears can have serious long term consequences for patients with frail skin and poor healing.

It is important to note that skin tears are a result of quick trauma to skin, compared with the slower development of a pressure injury.

#### how to report skin tears into SLS

##### 1. Subject of incident

Select 'Incident affecting patient'.

##### 2. Person Affected

Use this section to record the location of the skin tear and treatment required, and if the one patient has more than one skin tear.

- > Under 'Type', select patient/consumer/client and complete details.
- > For the question 'Was this person harmed in the incident?' respond yes, because a skin tear is harmful.
- > The 'Harm/Injury details' section will appear. From the lists select:
  - The harm/injury (skin tear)
  - The body part affected
  - The treatment required
- > Then click 'Add another injury' to record details of other skin tear(s). Select appropriate treatment option from drop down menu.

##### 3. Description of the Incident/Hazard/Event

Write a brief description of the incident, without and names or opinions.

#### 4. Open disclosure

For the question ‘Has this incident been disclosed to patient/family?’ indicate yes if you, or a team member, has discussed the skin tear(s) with the family and carer/family.

- > This discussion should include expressing regret that this has occurred, providing information about what will happen next and answering any questions they may have.
- > If there is any comment about how this discussion went, eg family angry or upset you can inform your line manager and include this information in the section above ‘What was the outcome of the incident’

#### 5. Incident Classification

There are four (4) ways to report a skin tear depending on how it occurred (i, ii, iii, and iv below). If you do not know how the skin tear occurred, please use the final option.

- i. Skin tears resulting from a **collision or external force** applied by an object or person. Examples include:
  - Contact with wheelchair footplate during a transfer
  - Skin tear from gripping, contact with fingernails during manual handling.

Incident Classification	
* Level 1	Patient Falls and other injuries
* Level 2	Collision or external force with object or person
* Level 3	Collision or external force with object or person
* Incident Severity Rating (ISR)	Patient Outcome: <input type="text"/> Treatment Required: <input type="text"/> ISR: <input type="text"/>
Select <b>Patient Outcome</b> first, and <b>Treatment Required</b> second. Click here to view: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incident Severity Rating tool</li> <li>• SLS Topic Guide - Incident Severity Rating (ISR)</li> <li>• SLS Video - Incident Severity Rating (ISR)</li> </ul>	

- ii. Skin tears occurring as an **unintended outcome of treatment**. An example is tearing of skin when removing dressings.

Incident Classification	
* Level 1	Treatment, procedure
* Level 2	Skin
* Level 3	Unintended injury in the course of an operation or clin task
* Incident Severity Rating (ISR)	Patient Outcome: <input type="text"/> Treatment Required: <input type="text"/> ISR: <input type="text"/>
Select <b>Patient Outcome</b> first, and <b>Treatment Required</b> second. Click here to view: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incident Severity Rating tool</li> <li>• SLS Topic Guide - Incident Severity Rating (ISR)</li> <li>• SLS Video - Incident Severity Rating (ISR)</li> </ul>	

- i. As part of a patient **fall**, a skin tear can occur.

For example, if a patient hit their arm on a chair as they fell or hit their head on the bed or floor. These should be reported as a patient fall, and the skin tear recorded as the ‘Harm/Injury’ details’ section (see 2).

#### Safety and Quality

## OFFICIAL

- ii. Skin tears occurring as a result of **another type of accident**. An example is where the water jug fell off the overway table and injured the patient's arm.

**NB** Use this option if you do not know how the skin tear occurred and the patient is not able to tell you. Select 'Accident of some other type or cause' as indicated in screen shot below.

Incident Classification	
* Level 1	Patient Falls and other injuries
* Level 2	Accident caused by some other means
* Level 3	Accident of some other type or cause
* Incident Severity Rating (ISR)	Patient Outcome: <input type="text"/>
Select <b>Patient Outcome</b> first, and <b>Treatment Required</b> second.	Treatment Required: <input type="text"/>
Click here to view:	ISR: <input type="text"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <a href="#">Incident Severity Rating tool</a></li><li>• <a href="#">SLS Topic Guide - Incident Severity Rating (ISR)</a></li><li>• <a href="#">SLS Video - Incident Severity Rating (ISR)</a></li></ul>	

## 6. Incident Severity Rating

The Incident Severity Rating (ISR) is a numerical score applied to patient incidents that considers the direct outcome and follow up treatment required following an incident.

All patient incidents reported into SLS require allocation of a Notifier ISR at the time of reporting. When completing the ISR fields consider both the direct patient outcome and subsequent treatment required at the time of reporting.

The ISR is automatically calculated upon selection of the relevant 'Patient Outcome' and 'Treatment Required' for that patient incident.

The ISR Tool can be found on the patient incident notifiers page of SLS under 'Incident Classification', or on the [Patient Incident Management in SLS](#) webpage under Topic Guides.

Incident Classification	
* Level 1	<input type="text"/>
* Level 2	<input type="text"/>
* Level 3	<input type="text"/>
* Incident Severity Rating (ISR)	Patient Outcome: <input type="text"/>
Select <b>Patient Outcome</b> first, and <b>Treatment Required</b> second.	Treatment Required: <input type="text"/>
Click here to view:	ISR: <input type="text"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <a href="#">Incident Severity Rating tool</a></li><li>• <a href="#">SLS Topic Guide - Incident Severity Rating (ISR)</a></li><li>• <a href="#">SLS Video - Incident Severity Rating (ISR)</a></li></ul>	

## 7. Final steps

Once the form is complete, click **submit**.

A message stating the incident number, and that it has been saved will appear. You will need to note this information if you would like to follow up with the relevant manager as it progresses.

---

## For more information

**SA Health, Safety and Quality**  
[Safetylearningsystem@sa.gov.au](mailto:Safetylearningsystem@sa.gov.au)  
11 Hindmarsh Square, Adelaide SA 5000  
[sahealth.sa.gov.au](http://sahealth.sa.gov.au)



[creativecommons.org/licenses](https://creativecommons.org/licenses)  
© Department for Health and Wellbeing, Government of South Australia. All rights reserved.  
December 2023.



**Government  
of South Australia**

SA Health

Safety and Quality