

# Skin and Soft Tissue Infections in Nursing Home Residents

## Signs and Symptoms Associated With Infection

- Sudden onset redness, warmth, tenderness, and swelling
- Findings are unilateral
- Presence of purulent drainage or abscess
- Fever, tachycardia present

## Signs and Symptoms Not Suggestive of Infection

- Stable or mild increase in redness of chronic skin changes
- Minimal warmth, tenderness
- Findings are bilateral
- No systemic illness

## Causes of Noninfectious Skin Findings

- Venous stasis dermatitis: skin pigmentation, edema, serous drainage, itching, minimal pain
- Lymphedema (associated with history of disruption of lymphatic drainage): redness improves with elevation; minimal warmth or pain
- Peripheral arterial disease: redness goes away with elevation; can have pain but no warmth
- Gout: redness and warmth associated with underlying joint inflammation
- Deep venous thrombosis: skin not involved but can have extremity swelling with redness and warmth

## Management

- Supportive care for all abnormalities:
  - Elevate legs
  - Compression stockings
  - Wound care
  - Physical therapy
  - Apply lotion
- If infection suspected:
  - Notify physician or advanced practitioner to discuss need for antibiotics
  - If abscess, refer for incision and drainage with culture of pus
- If clinically unstable (hypotension, fever, tachycardia) or severe symptoms:
  - Obtain blood cultures, if possible
  - Administer antibiotics, preferably intravenous
  - Discuss hospital transfer if hospital admission is part of goals of care