10.1: Integumentary Introduction

Learning Objectives

- Identify the patients at risk for impaired skin integrity
- Identify factors related to alterations in the integumentary system across the life span
- Assess a patient’s skin integrity
- Note normal from abnormal findings
- Assess the characteristics of the wound
- Apply correct terminology in the description of wounds
- Adapt care based on integumentary assessment data gathered
- Identify evidence-based practices

The integumentary system includes skin, hair, and nails. The skin is the largest organ of the body and has many purposes. Our skin keeps us warm and contains nerve endings that control the ability to feel the sensations of hot, cold, pain, and pressure. Our skin also keeps harmful things out of the body, such as dirt, bacteria, and viruses, and keeps helpful things in like moisture. Maintaining intact skin is important to prevent infection and maintain health. This chapter will review the anatomy and physiology of the integumentary system, factors that affect healthy skin and healing, and interventions that nurses perform to repair and protect this vital organ.