

Buck's Traction

● SKILL SNAPSHOT

Purpose

- Provides temporary skin traction to reduce muscle spasm, pain, and shortening while maintaining alignment before definitive treatment.

When to use

- Ordered for selected hip/femur injuries or preoperative immobilization; amount of weight and duration are prescribed.

Supplies needed

- Buck's boot/skin traction kit; ordered weights; ropes/pulleys; overhead frame; padding; skin and neurovascular assessment supplies.

● PREP + PATIENT SETUP

- Verify order, limb, weight, alignment, activity, and removal instructions.
- Assess skin, pain, limb length/rotation, and distal pulse, motor, sensation, color, temperature, cap refill.

● VAULT TIP

- Follow the line of pull from patient to weight. Any obstruction means traction is not functioning as ordered.

● STEP-BY-STEP

1. Hand hygiene; identify patient; provide analgesia and privacy.
2. Position patient supine with body aligned and affected leg straight in neutral alignment.
3. Inspect and cleanse/dry skin. Protect bony prominences; do not apply over damaged skin unless ordered.
4. Apply traction boot or skin straps smoothly according to manufacturer directions, avoiding wrinkles and constriction.
5. Secure spreader bar/rope to the boot. Ensure rope tracks centrally through pulleys without knots against pulleys.
6. Attach the exact prescribed weight; never add, remove, or substitute weight without an order.
7. Confirm weights hang freely off the floor and bed and do not rest against equipment.
8. Maintain countertraction by correct bed position, often slight foot elevation as ordered, and keep patient centered.
9. Check that ropes move freely, pulleys align, knots are secure, and nothing interrupts the line of pull.
10. Reassess distal neurovascular status, pain, skin, boot fit, alignment, and pressure points after application and at policy intervals.
11. Turn/reposition using approved technique while maintaining traction and body alignment. Provide heel/sacral care, ROM to unaffected joints, and DVT prevention.
12. If weights must be supported briefly for emergency care, use trained staff and restore traction immediately; otherwise do not lift them.

● SAFETY REMINDERS

- Weights must hang freely and traction must remain continuous.
- Do not release traction or alter weight without an order.
- Report increasing pain, numbness, coolness, pallor/cyanosis, absent pulse, or skin injury immediately.
- Watch for pressure injury, peroneal nerve compression, DVT, and foot drop.

● COMMON MISTAKES

- Weights resting on floor/bed.
- Ropes out of pulley grooves.
- Patient sliding toward foot of bed.
- Removing boot for routine care without order.

● DOCUMENTATION

- Ordered weight and traction setup.
- Alignment and equipment checks.
- Skin and neurovascular assessments.
- Pain, analgesia, mobility/positioning care.
- Complications, interventions, notifications.