CHAPTER 38 / Nursing Care of Clients with Musculoskeletal Trauma

Expect the client to have sutures and at least one Hemovac drain.
Perform neurovascular assessments frequently.
Also assess the following:
  a. Wounds for drainage
  b. Hemovac for drainage of serosanguineous fluid
  c. Bowel sounds
  d. Lung sounds

Administer medications, such as analgesics and antibiotics, per physician’s orders.
In hip fractures, place an abductor pillow between client’s legs to prevent dislocation of the hip joint.
Arrange for physical and occupational therapy, as ordered.
Assist with weight-bearing program, if ordered.
Encourage early mobilization, coughing, and deep breathing, as appropriate, to help prevent complications.

Traction
Muscle spasms usually accompany fractures and may pull bones out of alignment. **Traction** is the application of a straightening or pulling force to return or maintain the fractured bones in normal anatomic position. Weights are applied to maintain the necessary force. Types of traction are as follows:

- **In manual traction**, the hand directly applies the pulling force. Other common types of traction include straight traction, balanced suspension traction, skin traction, and skeletal traction (Figure 38–6).
- **Straight traction** is a pulling force applied in a straight line to the injured body part resting on the bed. The most common type of straight traction is Buck’s traction, in which the lower portion of the injured extremity is placed in a cradle-like sleeve. This sleeve is harnessed to itself, and a weight is hung from the bottom of a traction frame. The result is a force that pulls straight away from the body. This traction exerts its grabbing and pulling force through the client’s skin. Therefore, this traction may be considered straight skin traction. The advantage of skin traction is the relative ease of use and ability to maintain comfort. The disadvantage is that the weight required to maintain normal body alignment or fracture alignment cannot exceed the tolerance of the skin, about 6 lb per extremity.

**Figure 38–6** Traction is the application of a pulling force to maintain bone alignment during fracture healing. Different fractures require different types of traction. **A.** Skin traction (also called straight traction) such as Buck’s traction shown here, is often used for hip fractures. **B.** Balanced suspension traction is commonly used for fractures of the femur. **C.** Skeletal traction, in which the pulling force is applied directly to the bone, may be used to treat fractures of the humerus.