

INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS AND CARERS

ABOUT

PRESSURE ULCERS
(Pressure Sores or Bed Sores)

If you require this information in an alternative language or format (such as Braille, audiotape or large print), please ask the staff who are looking after you.

Are you at risk?

You or someone you know may be at risk of developing pressures ulcers.

The following increases the risk of developing a pressure ulcer:

- Problems with mobility or movement
- Poor circulation
- Incontinence of urine or faeces
- Poor diet or not having enough to drink
- Significant weight loss, or muscle loss
- Being significantly overweight
- Smoking
- Reduced sensation or the ability to feel pain
- A pre-existing health condition that affects the blood circulation system, such as diabetes, or arteriosclerosis (hardening of the arteries)
- Older or frail adults
- Being a wheelchair user or being unable to get out of bed
- An area of weak skin which may be prone to further damage
- Previous history of a pressure ulcer

What are Pressure Ulcers?

Pressure ulcers occur when the skin and underlying tissue becomes damaged by pressure, shearing or friction. They are also known as pressure sores, or bed sores.

Pressure

This results from sitting or lying in one position for too long, without moving.

Shearing

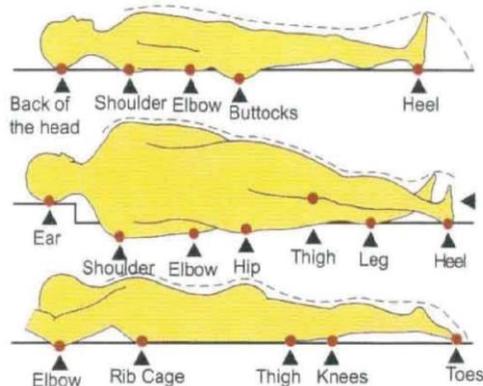
Shearing occurs when sliding up or down the bed or chair.

Friction

Repeated friction may occur if the pressure is not relieved. It can develop in a few days into an open blister, and over a long period the top layer of skin may be removed.

Pressure ulcers are likely to develop on parts of the body which take the most weight, particularly bony parts, for example buttocks, heels, elbows, shoulders and the back.

Common locations for pressure ulcers



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A pressure sore can develop in only a few hours, usually with the skin starting to change colour – appearing slightly redder or darker than usual or the area might feel warm to touch. Pain or discomfort may be experienced in the area before any changes to the skin are visible.

You can minimise the risk of pressure ulcers if you:

- Change your position at frequent intervals. If you find this difficult the nurses will advise and offer help.
- Avoid spending prolonged periods seated or in the same position.
- Inspect your skin (you can use a mirror to help you if needed). If you cannot see yourself then it is important to ask a carer to look at your skin on your behalf. Where applicable a nurse will offer to help you.
- Use pressure relieving aids, such as a special mattress or cushion. These will be provided to you where appropriate.
- Use pillows to stop your knees and ankles touching each other if you are lying on your side.

If you think that you or someone you know may be at risk of developing a pressure ulcer please contact a healthcare professional for further advice.

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