

## Keys to Prevention:

### If you are in a chair or wheelchair:

- Talk to your nurse about getting a chair cushion to reduce pressure.
- Remember that comfort and good posture are important.

### Improve your ability to move:

- Ask your nurse if you qualify for a rehabilitation program designed to help you improve movement.

### ***Be Active in Your Care!***

Reduce your risk of getting pressure ulcers. Get your family and healthcare involved in pressure ulcer prevention!

- Eat Right
- Drink plenty of fluids
- Keep pressure off your heels
- Keep your skin dry
- Notify your caregiver if you suspect any problems



You and  
Your Family  
Can Help  
Protect Your Skin  
from  
Pressure Ulcers

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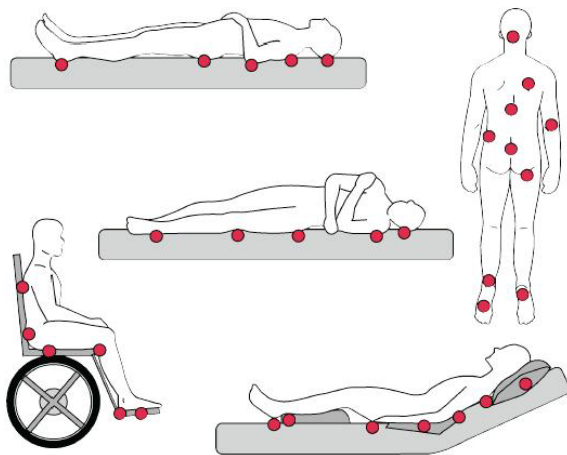
## What is a Pressure Ulcer?

A pressure ulcer, sometimes called a bedsore, is an injury to the skin and underlying tissue usually caused by constant pressure.

Pressure ulcers occur by constant pressure on the skin, squeezing tiny blood vessels, which supply the skin with nutrients and oxygen. When the skin is starved of nutrients and oxygen for too long, the tissue dies and pressure ulcers form.

Sliding down in bed or a chair can also cause pressure ulcers. This stretches or bends blood vessels, causing pressure ulcers. Even slight rubbing or friction on the skin may cause minor pressure ulcers that can quickly worsen.

Pressure ulcers usually occur on the shoulders, elbows, hips, buttocks, and heels. These areas are found over bony parts of the body that sustain pressure when lying in bed or sitting for long periods of time. Pressure ulcers begin as reddened areas, and can damage skin and muscles if not treated promptly.



The red dots indicate where pressure ulcers form most frequently.

## Pressure ulcers can lead to:

- Pain (notify a member of the health team if you are experiencing pain);
- Slower recovery; and
- Possible complications such as infection.

## Are you at Risk?

You have a greater risk of getting a pressure ulcer if you:

- Cannot change position without help
- Lose control of your bowels and/or bladder
- Do not eat a balanced diet or drink enough liquids
- Have times of confusion, forgetfulness and or restlessness
- Spend most of your day in bed or a chair
- Have medical conditions such as Diabetes Mellitus

## How to Prevent Pressure Ulcers:

### Limit Pressure:

- When you are in bed, your position should change at least every two hours.
- When you are in a chair, your position should change at least every hour.
- If you are able to shift your own weight while sitting, you should do so every 15 minutes.
- Avoid the use of donut-shaped cushions – they can cause injury to deep tissues.

### Reduce Friction:

- When shifting positions, or moving in bed, don't pull or drag yourself across the sheets. Also, don't push or pull with your heels.
- Avoid repetitive movements like rubbing your feet or elbows sheets.

## Safeguard Your Skin from Moisture:

- Use absorbent pads while in bed and briefs while out of bed that pull moisture away from your body.
- Apply cream or ointment to protect your skin from urine and/or stool.

## Take Care of Your Skin:

- Allow members of your healthcare team to inspect your skin at least once a day for any sign of redness or sores.
- If you notice abnormal areas, notify your nurse as soon as possible.
- Keep your skin clean and dry. Clean your skin thoroughly as soon as possible after soiling.
- Don't rub or massage skin over bony parts of your body.

## If you are confined to bed for long periods of time:

- Ask your nurse if you need a special mattress or overlay.
- Try to keep the head of your bed as low as possible (unless other medical conditions do not permit it). If you need to raise the head of the bed for activities, raise it to the lowest point possible for a short period of time.
- Pillows or foam wedges should be used to keep your knees or ankles from rubbing or pressing against each other.
- Avoid lying on your hipbone when lying on your side. Lay at an angle with pillows behind your back to distribute the pressure more evenly.
- Pillows should be placed under your legs from mid-calf to ankle to keep your heels off the bed. Do not place pillows behind your knees or directly under your heels.