



Patient Information: Preventing Pressure Injuries

WHAT IS A PRESSURE INJURY?

A pressure injury is a sore that develops when blood flow to part of the body is blocked and the tissue in that area dies (also known as a pressure ulcer or bed sore). Pressure injuries can range from a discoloration of the skin to an open sore that goes all the way to the bone. They occur most often in areas where the bone sticks out like a heel, tail bone or hip.

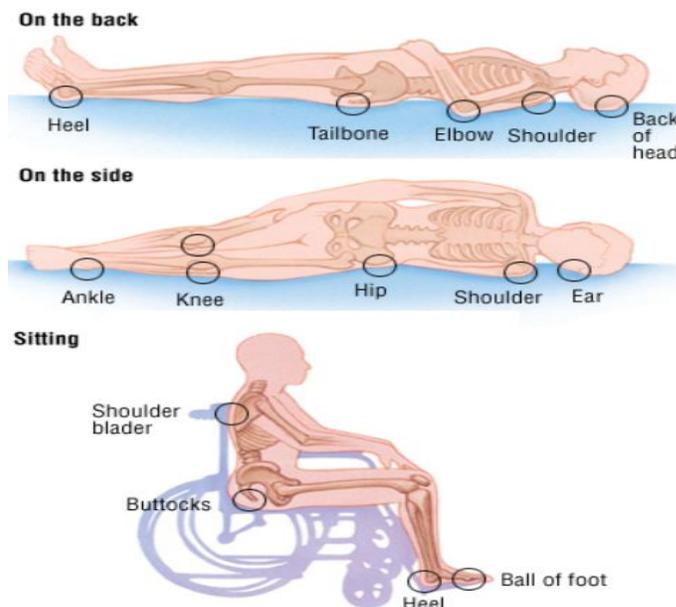
HOW DO THEY HAPPEN?

- Sores are caused when tissue is squeezed between a solid surface like a chair seat or mattress and the bone. The pressure pinches off tiny blood vessels.
- Rubbing or friction can remove the top layers of skin.
- When skin sticks to a surface and the rest of the body moves, such as when transferring (bed to chair or sliding in bed), blood vessels can kink or tear. This is called shearing.
- Moisture from sweating, urine, or stool can make skin more fragile.

WHAT ARE THE RISK FACTORS?

- Decreased mobility or needing help to move
- Decreased sensation (neuropathy, diabetic foot, paralysis)
- Malnutrition, dehydration
- Advanced age
- Too much moisture (urine, stool or perspiration)
- Cognitive challenges (Alzheimer, Dementia, cannot express pain)
- Circulatory disease
- Overweight or too thin

WHAT BODY PARTS ARE AT RISK?



SKIN INSPECTION: WHAT SHOULD I LOOK FOR?

- Bedbound patients or those with decreased mobility need to have their skin inspected every day for the following signs:
 - Redness that does not go away 30 minutes after relieving pressure
 - Change in color (reddish, purplish, blackish) of a specific area, especially over bone
 - Blisters

HOW DO I PREVENT PRESSURE ULCERS?

Reduce Pressure

- Change position often. When sitting, nearly half of the body's weight is supported by the ischial tuberosities or "sit bones."
- Change position slightly every 15 minutes when sitting.
- In a wheelchair, always use the foot supports since they help to distribute your weight.
- Lift your buttocks off the seat by pushing on the arm rests and keep suspended or lean forward for 1 1/2 minutes every hour.
- If you're lying in bed or sitting for long periods of time, change positions about every 2 hours (alternate between sides and back).
- In bed, use a pillow between your legs, knees and ankles (don't press together) and keep your heels off the mattress.

Transfers

- Lift your buttocks from bed before transferring to keep your skin from sticking.
- Use a transfer sheet, and don't drag.

Reduce Moisture

- Keep skin clean and dry.
- Change soiled diapers or sheets rapidly.
- Wear cotton clothing to help perspiration evaporate.

Keep Skin Healthy

- Drink six cups of fluid a day (alcohol, coffee and tea don't count).
- Use a pH balanced soap.
- Pat dry, don't rub.
- Use a moisturizer.

Lifestyle

- Quit smoking. Smoking robs the body of Vitamin C and reduces oxygen to your skin.
- Eat right. A balanced diet high in protein can protect and help healing.
- Take multivitamins if needed.
- Take a food supplement, such as Ensure or Boost, if food intake is not enough.
- Exercise. It improves circulation, builds muscle (padding), prevents stiff joints and makes changing position and transferring easier.

THINGS TO AVOID

- Don't use a doughnut shape cushion. They just relocate the pressure.
- Don't rub reddened areas. It may create more damage.
- Don't use sheepskin or ordinary pillows for padding. They don't help.
- Don't ignore reddened areas. They are your warning sign.

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