

Patient Information

Pressure Ulcers (Sores)

Tissue Viability Service



What is a pressure ulcer?

A pressure ulcer is an area of damaged skin and underlying tissue. It is also commonly known as a bedsore or pressure sore. A pressure ulcer can develop in only a few hours and it usually starts with the skin changing colour. They are most likely to develop on parts of the body which take your weight and where the bone is close to the surface.

Who is most likely to get a pressure ulcer?

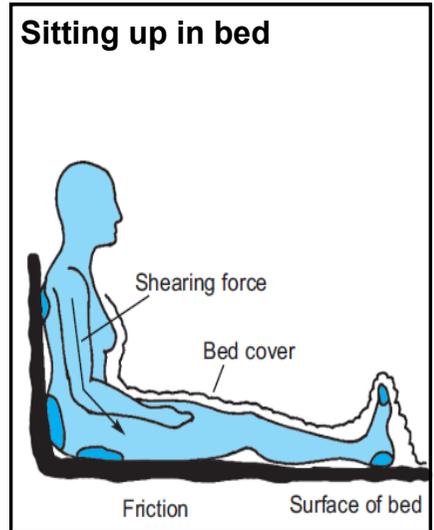
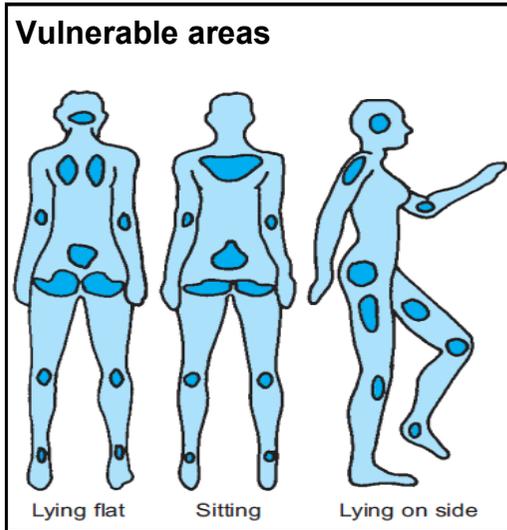
You are more likely to get a pressure ulcer if:

- You have to stay in bed
- You spend long periods sitting still in a chair
- You have difficulty moving about, for example because you are in pain
- You are elderly or weak
- You have a serious illness
- You have moist skin, caused by sweat, incontinence or a leaking wound
- Your body has lost sense of feeling somewhere, for example because you are diabetic or have had a stroke.
- You have poor circulation
- You are not eating a balanced diet or drinking enough fluids.
- You have had a pressure ulcer in the past

How to prevent a pressure ulcer

The health care team will assess your risk of developing a pressure ulcer. If required a written plan of care will be devised to help prevent you getting a pressure ulcer.

One of the best ways of preventing pressure ulcers is to avoid heavy and constant pressure on vulnerable parts of the body. The healthcare team will remind / help you to change position if necessary.



How can you change your position?

This refers to when you are lying in bed and when you are sitting in a chair because both are equally important. You can change from side to side and on your back in bed. The bed you are lying on can help you to change your position, please ask the nursing staff to explain the functions of the bed to you.

When you are sitting in a chair try to take the weight off your bottom by leaning forward and pushing up on the arms of the chair, or you can roll from cheek to cheek for a short while. Alternatively, you could go for a walk. The frequency of these changes of position will be determined by the nurse following an assessment of your level of risk.

Equipment

Your nurse will assess your risk of developing a pressure ulcer and will use this to decide if you need any specialist equipment, such as an air mattress, cushion or heel protection. You will already be on an electric bed with a mattress designed to reduce pressure. The nurses will need to regularly inspect your skin to look for any signs of damage.

Other factors important in the prevention of pressure ulcers

It is important that you keep your skin clean and dry as moisture can increase the risk of getting a pressure ulcer. If you feel able, you could check your own skin for damage by the use of a mirror.

If you are eating you need to eat a balanced diet and have plenty of fluids. This ensures your skin is well hydrated and getting the nutrients it needs to stay healthy. If you have any special dietary needs, please discuss these with the nurses on your ward who may refer you to a dietician.

Photography

If you are admitted with a pressure ulcer or develop one whilst in our care, we will arrange for a clinical photographer to take a photograph of the ulcer for your medical records. We will ask your permission beforehand.

Further guidance

The nurses on the ward can manage your risk of developing pressure ulcers, but if further guidance is required your nurses can contact the Tissue Viability Service for additional advice.

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