

INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS

Pressure ulcer prevention

This leaflet tells you about pressure ulcers, (also known as pressure sores or bed sores), what they are, how you might develop one and how you can help prevent them.

What is a pressure ulcer?

A pressure ulcer is damage which occurs to the skin and underlying tissue. It usually happens when you sit or lie in the same position for too long. It might appear as minor discoloured skin, but may develop into something more serious, which can affect deeper tissue or even bone.

Pressure ulcers can develop quickly, therefore it is important to prevent them or notice early signs of damage.

What causes pressure ulcers?

There are three causes of pressure ulcers:

- Pressure – the weight of the body pressing down on the skin. This may cause damage to the skin's blood supply.
- Shearing – strain upon the skin caused when body weight moves but skin does not. For example, when you slide down or are pulled up in a bed or chair.
- Friction can make your skin more vulnerable and contribute to pressure ulcers, for example, when the skin is scraped along a surface when moving.

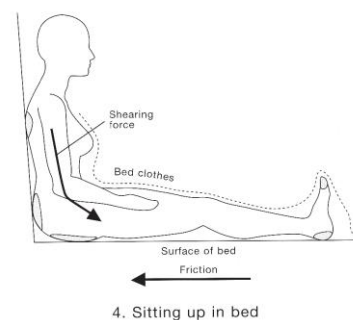
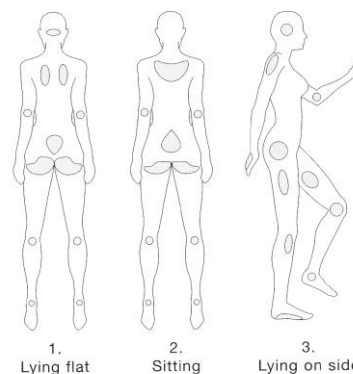
Who gets pressure ulcers?

Anyone can get a pressure ulcer but you are more likely to develop one if you have:

- Problems with movement
- Problems with pain and discomfort
- Poor circulation
- Damp skin due to incontinence, sweating or a weeping wound
- Had previous pressure ulcers
- Inadequate diet or fluid intake
- Poor sensation in areas of the body
- A serious medical condition
- Had surgery.

Pressure risk areas

The shaded areas marked on the pictures below show you where you are most likely to develop pressure ulcers.



Prevention

Keeping moving

One of the best ways of preventing a pressure ulcer is to reduce or relieve pressure on vulnerable areas. Your healthcare professional should advise you and your carer on how pressure is best reduced or relieved. The advice should include:

- Correct sitting and lying positions
- How to adjust your sitting and lying position
- How often you need to move or be moved
- Supporting your feet
- Keeping good posture
- Which equipment you should use and how, for example mattresses and cushions.

A good diet

A healthy balanced diet and drinking enough water is important in pressure ulcer prevention. Your healthcare professional should discuss your diet with you, and suggest possible improvements that could be made.

Skin assessment

Your skin should be assessed regularly by your healthcare professional to check for signs of pressure ulcer development, such as:

- Red/purple/blue patches on skin
- Swelling
- Blisters
- Shiny areas
- Dry patches
- Cracks, callouses, wrinkles
- Hard areas
- Warm areas.

You should also receive advice on barrier treatments to protect your skin from moisture.

Pain relief

It is important to receive adequate pain relief. Please discuss this with your healthcare professional.

Self care

It is important to move and change position yourself as often as you can. People with limited movement may need help from their healthcare professional.

Remember - prevention is better than cure.

Further sources of information

NHS Choices: www.nhs.uk/conditions

Our website: www.sfh-tr.nhs.uk

Patient Experience Team (PET)

PET is available to help with any of your compliments, concerns or complaints, and will ensure a prompt and efficient service.

King's Mill Hospital: 01623 672222

Newark Hospital: 01636 685692

Email: sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net

If you would like this information in an alternative format, for example large print or easy read, or if you need help with communicating with us, for example because you use British Sign Language, please let us know. You can call the Patient Experience Team on 01623 672222 or email sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net.

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