

Prevention and Treatment of Pressure Ulcers

Name of Patient.....

Comments/Equipment on loan.....

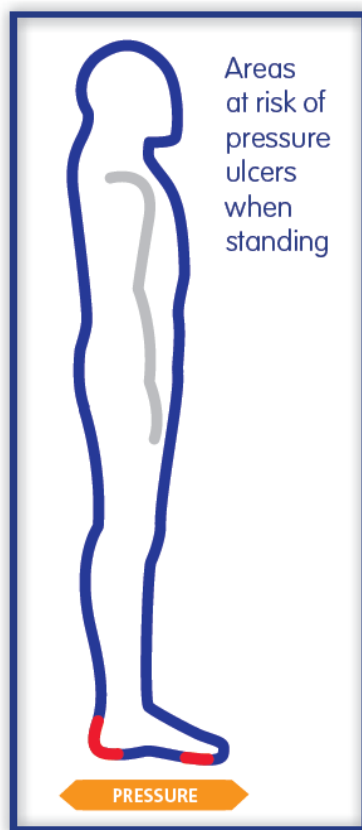
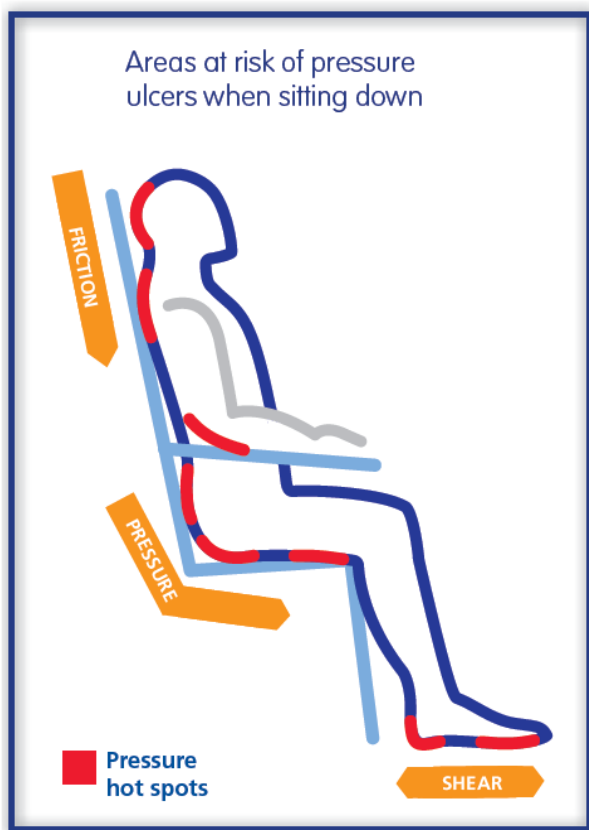
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Community Health and Social Hub

Just one number to call:
0300 304 5555

What is a pressure ulcer?

A pressure ulcer (sometimes called a bed sore) is an area of damage to the skin and underlying tissue. Pressure ulcers can affect not just the skin, but also the fatty tissue beneath the skin. Apart from being very painful, a pressure ulcer could affect recovery from your illness, cause pain, discomfort and distress, and could result in an admission to hospital.



How do pressure ulcers develop?

Pressure ulcers can develop because of any of the following reasons, and can occur in a matter of hours if you become unwell or stop eating/drinking:

Pressure: the weight of the body can squash the skin of people at risk of pressure damage. For example, sitting in a chair for a long period of time or lying in a bed without moving can cause the skin to break down. Items that apply pressure, such as tight shoes, can also cause pressure ulcers; this can cause damage to the blood supply which then leads to skin breakdown.

Rubbing (shearing): dragging or constant rubbing of the skin across a surface can cause grazing which will weaken the skin. Even rubbing the skin 'to get the circulation going' can cause damage to the skin and should be avoided.

What can you do to look after your skin or skin of the person you care for?

- Change positions regularly
- If you are mobile get up and walk around as often as you feel able or at least every two hours.
- If you are immobile but sitting in a chair, try lifting your weight. Offloading heels - keeping pressure off heels. Taking the weight off an area of pressure, such as heels.
- If you are being nursed in bed and are able to, change your position frequently and try lying on alternate sides, sit up slightly, and try to distribute pressure evenly.
- If you are unable to move yourself, you should be assisted by your carers or healthcare team to change your position regularly.
- Check your skin at least once a day in the areas where there is constant pressure, for early signs of pressure damage. Ask a carer to help or use a mirror for the hard-to-see areas.
- If you find any hard or warm areas, avoid lying on that area until seen by a health professional
- Eat a well-balanced, high-protein diet. Include fish, meat, and eggs, and try to drink plenty of fluids
- Keep your skin clean and dry and look for swelling, blistering, shiny areas, dry patches, or cracks.

Where is a pressure ulcer most likely to appear?

On parts of the body that take your weight and where the bones are close to the surface. For example:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Heels | <input type="checkbox"/> Shoulders |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Elbows | <input type="checkbox"/> Spine |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bottom | <input type="checkbox"/> Back of the head |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hips | |

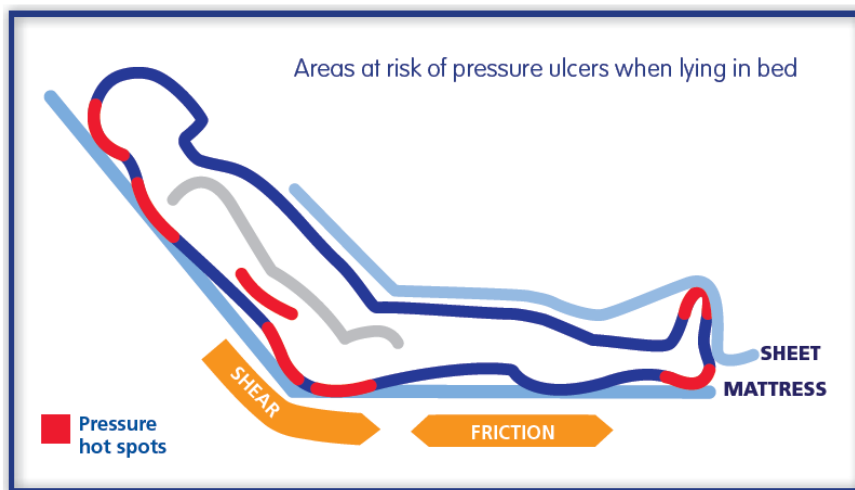
Who is most at risk?

Anyone can develop a pressure ulcer, although some people are more at risk than others. These include:

- People who need help to move / change position
- Elderly people - as skin becomes thinner and less elastic
- People who have become ill or have long-standing illness
- People with reduced sensitivity to pain or discomfort
- People with poor circulation
- People with awareness and memory problems
- People who have problems with continence
- People who are not eating a well-balanced diet. Drinking plenty of liquids is also essential.

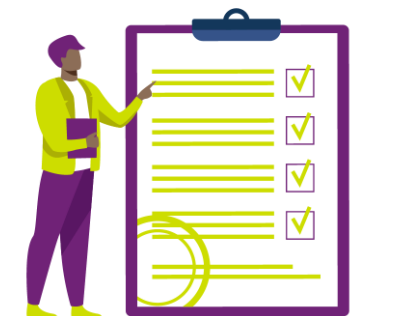
If you are concerned that you/someone you care for is at risk or has developed a pressure ulcer:

- You must seek advice from a health professional. This could be through your local GP, NHS Direct, or, if in a hospital or a nursing home, with the nursing staff.
- The District Nursing Service can be contacted on 0300 304 5555
- The District Nursing Service will review you/the affected person to establish if there is a risk of a pressure ulcer developing.
- Advice and support will be offered, and a care plan developed, if needed. This may involve the use of a special mattress for the bed and a pressure-reducing cushion for when the person is seated.
- The pressure ulcer may be drawn or photographed regularly by the healthcare team for monitoring.



Key messages:

- Most pressure ulcers are avoidable.
- Change your position as often as possible to limit the pressure.
- Check your skin or ask someone to check it for you daily.
- Health professionals rely on you to report concerns so that they can help you relieve pressure, reduce risks and receive specialist equipment. Please let us know as soon as you have concerns.
- Pressure ulcers can develop anywhere on the body, especially if you are in a high-risk group as above.





Health & Wellbeing

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