

Pressure Ulcers

Patient and Carer Information

Tissue Viability Service

Author ID: TV
Leaflet Number: CM 264
Version: 1
Name of Leaflet: Pressure Ulcers-Patient and Carer
Date Produced: February 2020
Review Date: February 2022

What are Pressure Ulcers?

Pressure ulcers are areas of damage to skin and underlying tissue. They are usually caused by sitting or lying in one position for too long without moving, or by dragging your skin across a surface. A pressure ulcer can develop in only a few hours. It usually starts with the skin changing colour – it may appear slightly redder or darker than usual. If an ulcer is not treated, it can develop to an open wound, which can then lead to more serious skin problems.

Which areas are most likely to develop pressure ulcers?

Ulcers tend to develop on parts of your body which take your weight and where your bone is near the surface.

At Low Risk

The person can change their position without help or prompting. They have a good appetite and no serious health problems.

High Risk

The person may have reduced mobility and require prompting to move regularly. They may have occasional continence problems and poor diet and fluid intake

Very High Risk

The person cannot change position without help or prompting. They may have reduced feeling to areas of the body or poor circulation. They may have persistent continence problems, poor diet and fluid intake and poor general health.

How can we prevent Pressure Sores?

Skin inspection

Inspect the skin regularly for signs of possible or actual damage. Look for skin that does not go back to its normal colour after weight has been taken off it, or it has become discoloured.

Keep moving

Anyone at risk of a pressure ulcer should avoid sitting in a chair or bed for prolonged periods without getting up for a walk or changing position.

In a wheelchair

Anyone in a wheelchair should take weight off any part of the body that has been in contact with the surface of the wheelchair every fifteen minutes by leaning forward and pushing up on the arms of the chair.

They should regularly roll from buttock to buttock a few times. If they are in bed, they should alternate between lying on their back and sides at least every two hours.

Incontinence management

Moisture from sweating or incontinence can weaken the skin, making it more vulnerable to damage. It is important to keep skin clean, dry and well moisturised.

Creams may be used to protect vulnerable areas of the skin from moisture damage.

Nutrition & hydration

Eating well and drinking plenty of fluids will help to prevent pressure ulcers. Aim for two litres per day, as this will help to keep skin healthy.

Surface selection

Pressure relieving equipment may be recommended by a health care professional. A pressure relieving plan will be agreed with the patient and this may include specialist pressure relieving equipment. If the patient's condition improves, then the equipment will no longer be needed.

Tell your healthcare professional if you or someone you know:

- Is not eating as much as usual
- Is not moving as much as usual
- Has a sore bottom / heels / hips / elbows
- Has a problem with a cushion / mattress, is sleeping in a chair rather than a bed
- Is having continence problems
- Is experiencing reduced feeling in the feet
- Has had a pressure ulcer before

Shared decision making

This puts the person at the centre of any decisions made about their own treatment and care. A healthcare worker will support the person making the best decision for them.

Please use this space to write notes/reminders.

Comments, Compliments or Complaints

The Patient Relations/Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) Department provides confidential on the spot advice, information and support to patients, relatives, friends and carers.

Contact Us

Tel: 01942 822376 (Monday to Friday 9am to 4pm)

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Ask 3 Questions

Become more involved in decisions about your healthcare. You may be asked to make choices about your treatment. To begin with, try to make sure you get the answers to three key questions:

1. What are my options?
2. What are the pros and cons of each option for me?
3. How do I get support to help me make a decision that is right for me?



How We Use Your Information

For details on how we collect, use and store the information we hold about you, please take a look at our “how we use your information” leaflet which can be found on the Trust website: www.wwl.nhs.uk/patient_information/Leaflets

This leaflet is also available in audio, large print, braille and other languages upon request. For more information please ask in department/ward.

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