

SKIN CARE AND PRESSURE INJURY PREVENTION



What is a pressure injury?

A pressure injury (or a “bedsore”) is an injury to the skin and tissues under the skin, usually caused by sitting or lying in the same position for too long.

These injuries usually occur on the buttocks, hips, heels, elbows and shoulders because they are bony and take most of the pressure when you are lying in bed or sitting. Pressure injuries begin as red or purple areas, but can progress to damage the skin and deeper tissues if not treated.

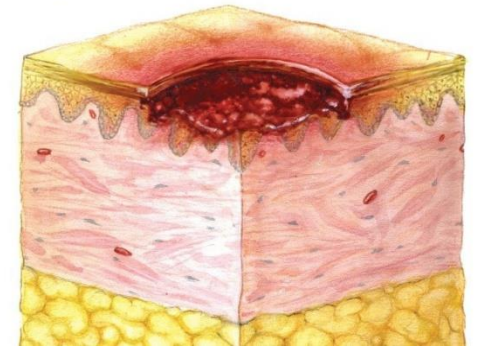
What causes a pressure injury?

Constant pressure on the skin decreases blood flow and leads to tissue damage from a lack of oxygen and nutrients. Sliding down in a bed or chair stretches the skin and tissues and may also lead to a pressure injury. Even rubbing or friction on the skin may cause damage or make a minor pressure injury worse.

What increases the risk?

- Difficulty moving or changing positions
- Frequent or long periods where skin is in contact with urine and stool
- Not eating or drinking enough
- Confusion that limits moving and changing position
- Decreased feeling in the skin
- Health conditions like diabetes and poor circulation

Pressure injuries can happen within a few hours



Pressure injuries are serious and can lead to:

- Pain
- Slower recovery from health problems
- Complications such as infection, longer periods of bed rest
- Surgery to heal a pressure injury
- Death

Key Steps to Prevent a Pressure Injury

Avoid Long Periods of Pressure

When someone is in bed and unable to move and reposition themselves, frequent position changes are necessary.

When a person sits for long periods of time they shift their weight or change position every 15 minutes. If they cannot do this on their own we should assist with repositioning at least once an hour.

Never leave blankets, towels, incontinent pads or slings under someone when they are sitting in their wheelchairs or lying in bed.

Reduce Friction

When changing a person's positions or moving them in bed, don't pull or drag them across the sheets. Use a slider or Breeze/Swift system.

Assessment of Skin

- Inspect the person regularly if they are at risk. If you notice any red, purple, painful or open areas of skin, reposition them and notify the nurse immediately.
- Prevent dry skin by using moisturizing creams and barrier creams.
- Don't rub or massage skin if it is red or purple.
- Immediately clean urine and stool from their skin to prevent skin breakdown.

Protect skin from moisture

- If the person is incontinent of bladder and bowel ensure the proper fit of incontinent product is used. Frequent changing of incontinent product is necessary.
- Apply an extra protective cream to protect the skin from urine and/or stool.
- Minimize layers of linens/padding underneath the person as this can trap in heat and moisture.

Confined to bed?

Avoid raising the head of the bed too high. If you need to raise the head of the bed for certain activities or it is needed for their condition or comfort, raise it to the lowest point possible for as short a time as possible.

Use pillows to keep the person's knees and ankles from pressing against each other and from keeping heels from touching the mattress. If the person moves their legs frequently, you will need to reposition pillows more frequently or use pressure offloading heel boots.

When the person is on their side, avoid laying them directly on their hip bone. Roll them back slightly so they lay between their buttock and hip and position them with pillows to keep this position.

Reposition frequently, at least every two hours.