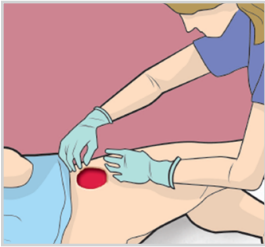


PRESSURE INJURY PREVENTION MADE EASY



A pressure injury, sometimes called a “bed sore,” is an injury to your skin that is caused by pressure. Sitting or lying in one position without moving puts pressure on your skin and slows down blood flow. When blood flow slows down, skin and tissue can die and result in a pressure injury. Pressure injuries can be painful, hard to heal, and can cause other problems such as infections.

Some of the most common places for pressure injuries to develop are over bony areas on the body. These include: the heels, tailbone, elbows, hips, shoulders, back of the head, and knees.

Risk factors

Certain people may be more at risk for developing a pressure injury. You have a risk of developing a pressure injury if you are unable to move around due to:

- » Poor health or weakness
- » Paralysis
- » Injury or illness that requires bed rest or wheelchair
- » Recovery from surgery

Additional factors may put someone more at risk for pressure injury development. Some of the most common risk factors include:

- » **Limited mobility and bed or chair confinement.** When it is difficult or impossible for someone to move independently, they may not be able to shift their weight to redistribute the pressure on their skin.
- » **Incontinence.** If someone is unable to control their bowels and/or bladder, their skin is exposed to higher levels of moisture, which can irritate the skin.
- » **Poor nutrition and dehydration.** Eating healthy foods and drinking plenty of water are both vital to maintaining healthy skin. Without the right foods or enough water, skin may be at greater risk for breakdown.
- » **Lowered mental awareness.** Those who suffer from poor mental functions may experience difficulties in taking care of themselves. They may not have the ability to recognize cues from their bodies to shift their weight.
- » **Age.** Skin changes with age, becoming drier, thinner, and more fragile. This increases the risk of skin breakdown.
- » **Friction and shear.** Sliding on a sheet or a bed can cause skin to rub and tear, which may weaken the skin.

This document is not intended to treat, diagnose or prescribe. The information is for educational purposes only and is not meant to take the place of a consultation with a licensed healthcare professional.

Tips for prevention

Skin care

Taking care of your skin is really important. As you age, skin becomes drier and can be damaged more easily.

- » Keep your skin hydrated with moisturizers, especially after a bath or shower.
- » Inspect skin daily. Look for redness or any skin breakdown. Report any changes to your healthcare professional.
- » Skin should be washed with warm (avoid hot) water and use gentle cleansers to minimize dryness.
- » Avoid aggressive massage or massaging over bony areas such as hips.
- » Replace soaps with skin cleansing products.

Moisture management

If you have accidental leakage of urine or stool, it is especially important to make sure your skin is protected from urine and stool.

- » Clean skin well any time it comes in contact with urine or stool.
- » Talk to your doctor or nurse about a protective cream for your skin to prevent urine or stool from irritating it. Look for products at your local drug store that include the words “skin protectant” or “barrier cream.” Ask the pharmacist for help finding the best fit.
- » Use underpads or disposable underwear that are absorbent and keep moisture away from your skin.

Communication

Whether you are staying in a healthcare facility for an extended period of time or recovering at home, it is important to be involved in your care. Talk to your doctors and nurses about your risk for pressure injuries. Ask questions so that you understand your care completely and have the opportunity to address any concerns you may have.

Important phone numbers

Doctor: _____

Pharmacy: _____

Hospital: _____

Other healthcare professional: _____

Pressure reduction and movement

When sitting:

- » Adjust your weight every 15 minutes.
- » Use a chair cushion while sitting.
- » Use good posture while sitting.

When lying:

- » Turn from your back to either side every 2 hours or less.
- » Keep the head of the bed as low as possible while in bed.
- » Use pillows or wedges to help take pressure off a certain area, especially your heels and between your knees.
- » Talk to your healthcare professional about getting a special mattress or pad.
- » Take care not to slide down or across the bed.

Proper Nutrition

Eating right is very important in preventing pressure injuries.

- » Eat a well-balanced diet according to your doctor’s instructions.
- » Drink plenty of water to stay hydrated.

Watch out for the most common places where a pressure injury can develop: heels, hips, tailbone, shoulders, and knees.

If you believe you have a pressure injury or skin breakdown, contact a healthcare professional immediately.

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