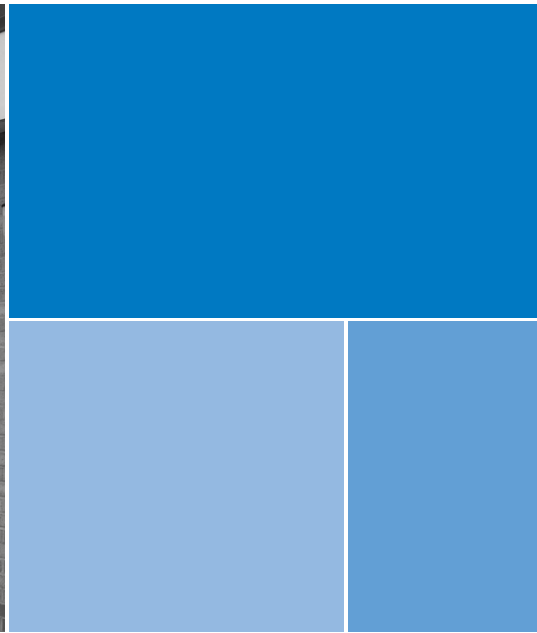


# Pressure Ulceration Prevention



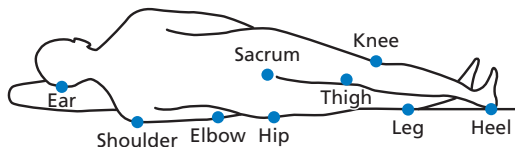
Information for Patients  
and Carers

## What is a pressure ulcer?

Pressure ulcers, also known as bed sores and pressure sores, are areas of damage to the skin and underlying tissue, usually caused by pressure, shearing or friction.

## Where do pressure ulcers occur?

Pressure ulcers occur over bony prominences such as the bottom of the spine, heels, hips, buttocks and shoulder blades. Other areas can be seen opposite.



## What causes pressure ulcers?

Pressure ulcers are caused by three main things:

- Pressure - the weight of the body pressing down on the skin. This can happen when a person is immobile for a long period of time i.e. ill and in bed or sitting in a chair or wheelchair without the pressure being relieved.
- Shear - the layers of the skin are forced to slide over one another, e.g. when you slide down or are pulled up a bed/chair.
- Friction - rubbing of the skin.

Other causes include; poor circulation, poor diet or fluid intake, long-term steroid therapy, moist skin (through incontinence, sweating or weeping wounds), diabetes and stroke.

## What to look out for

- Red patches of skin (light skinned people)
- Bluish/purple patches of skin (dark skinned people)
- Blisters or damage to the skin
- Patches of hot skin
- Swelling over bony areas
- Hard areas of skin.

If you have any pain or discomfort on any of these areas, please tell a healthcare professional immediately.

## What can you do to prevent getting a pressure ulcer?

- It is important to move and change position yourself as often as you can.
- Check your own skin to look for signs of pressure ulcers.
- Eat a healthy diet and drink plenty of water.
- Avoid repeated friction and shearing.
- Tell someone as soon as you think you may have one.
- Keep skin clean and dry.

**Remember, prevention is better than cure!**

## What to expect from healthcare professionals

- Healthcare professionals work together with patients so that patients can play an active part in making decisions about their care. The treatment offered should take into account each patient's individual needs and preferences.
- Your healthcare professional should assess and regularly reassess whether you are at risk of developing a pressure ulcer, including checking your skin.
- If you have, or are at risk of developing a pressure ulcer, your healthcare professional should work with you to find ways to help you move around and change position. They should monitor your movement to ensure that any vulnerable areas of your body are relieved of pressure at regular intervals.
- This may involve using a repositioning regime and recording changes in your position.

## Assessing pressure ulcers

If you have a pressure ulcer it should be examined and regularly re-examined by a healthcare professional. They should discuss with you what caused it, they should also record where it is, size, what it looks like and any signs of infection.

The healthcare professional will use a grading system to indicate the severity of an ulcer from Grade 1 - for an area of discoloration to Grade 4 - a deep wound. You may be asked for a medical photograph to be taken of the pressure ulcer to enable staff to monitor the healing. You will need to sign a consent form for this.

## Treatment

The most effective method of preventing pressure ulcers is regular movement to relieve pressure. There are many different types of mattress and cushion that can also be used to help to reduce pressure. This is not a substitute for helping you to change your position and your healthcare professional should work with you to decide which types of pressure relieving supports are best for you.

- If you have a pressure ulcer a wound dressing may be required. Dressing will be done either on the ward or in the Central Treatment Suite.
- If you have any signs of infection, your healthcare professional may treat it with antibiotics or special dressings that assist wound healing.
- In some cases your treatment may involve removal of damaged skin.

## Who can help?

If you have any questions relating to this leaflet please ask the trained nurse looking after you.

**For further information please contact:**

Tissue Viability Nurse Telephone 01493 452299

**Please remember**, this leaflet is designed to give you some advice on how to try to prevent pressure ulcers developing. Not all steps apply to each person at risk. The best programme for preventing ulcers is one based on your individual needs.

## Feedback

We want your visit to be as comfortable as possible. Please talk to the person in charge if you have any concerns. If the ward/department staff are unable to resolve your concern, please ask for our Patient Advice and Liaison (PALS) information. Please be assured that raising a concern will not impact on your care. **Before you leave the hospital you will be asked to complete a Friends and Family Test feedback card.** Providing your feedback is vital in helping to transform NHS services and to support patient choice.

### Trust Values

#### Courtesy and respect

- A welcoming and positive attitude
- Polite, friendly and interested in people
- Value and respect people as individuals  
So people feel **welcome**

#### Attentively kind and helpful

- Look out for dignity, privacy & humanity
- Attentive, responsive & take time to help
- Visible presence of staff to provide care  
So people feel **cared for**

#### Responsive communication

- Listen to people & answer their questions
- Keep people clearly informed
- Involve people  
So people feel **in control**
- **Effective and professional**
- Safe, knowledgeable and reassuring
- Effective care / services from joined up teams
- Organised and timely, looking to improve  
So people feel **safe**



The hospital can arrange for an interpreter or person to sign to assist you in communicating effectively with staff during your stay. Please let us know.

**For a large print version of this leaflet, contact PALS 01493 453240**

**Author:**

**Tina Dyble, Tissue Viability Nurse**

James Paget University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

© January 2010 Revised December 2010,  
April 2012, October 2017  
James Paget University Hospitals NHS  
Foundation Trust  
Review Date: October 2020  
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