

Preventing Pressure Areas

Information for Patients & Carers



KINGSWAY
DAY SURGERY

Move! Move! Move!

What is a Pressure Injury?

A pressure injury (also known as a pressure sore, bed sore or pressure ulcer) is an area of skin that has been damaged due to unrelieved pressure. Pressure injuries may look minor, such as redness on the skin or a sore spot over the tailbone, heels, elbows, hips or buttocks, but they can hide more damage under the skin's surface.

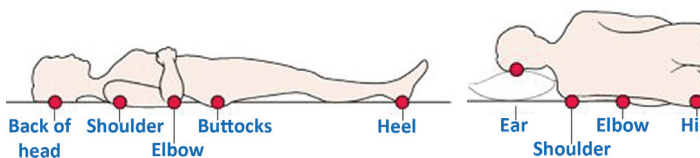
Who gets Pressure Injuries?

People of all ages from babies to elderly people are at risk if they:

- are confined to bed or a chair for a long period and are unable to move by themselves.
- have a long operation.
- have loss of sensation or reduced sensitivity to pain due to stroke or nerve damage.
- have moist skin due to loss of bowel or bladder control (incontinence).
- diabetics are particularly prone to pressure injuries due to poor circulation.

Causes

- The most common cause is prolonged pressure on an area of skin.
- The weight of the body can compress skin and other tissues, particularly over bony areas like heels, hips and elbows, damaging blood supply to the area of skin and leading to tissue damage.



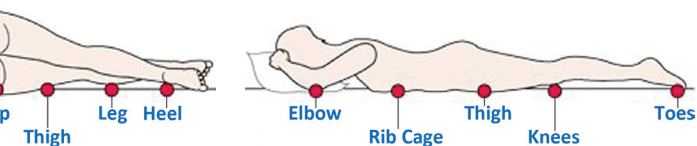
- Shearing and Friction – sliding over a bed or chair can remove top layers of skin (friction) or drag skin layers over each other (shearing). It can be that easy!
- Other problems which can contribute to the development of a pressure injury are a poor diet prior to coming into hospital and a history of pressure injuries in the past.

Where are Pressure Injuries found?

Pressure injuries usually occur over bony areas, such as heels, tailbone, hips, toes, ears and elbows.

Prevention

- The best way to relieve pressure is to keep active and change position every 20 minutes whether you are lying in bed or sitting in a chair.
- If you are unable to move yourself, you will need to ask your nurse for assistance to change your position regularly.
- It is important to keep your skin and bedding dry so, if you have urinary or faecal incontinence, use the recommended incontinence pads and barrier creams to help protect the skin.
- Skin should be washed with a mild soap and moisturised if it is dry after washing, but massaging or rubbing over bony parts of the body should be avoided.
- Special equipment such as air mattresses, booties or cushions may be used to reduce pressure and prevent friction and shearing of the skin.



What can I do?

You and your carer should examine your skin at least once a day to see if there are any sore areas or areas of redness caused by lying in bed or sitting in a chair. Tubing from drains / drips or creases in linen can cause an area of pressure, if positioned directly under any part of your body. Tell staff if you have any soreness over a bony area, redness, blistered or broken skin.

It is important for you to eat a well balanced diet to aid healing and reduce your risk of getting a pressure injury. If you are unable to eat a normal diet because of your illness or you have poor nutrition for other reasons, we will arrange for the dietician to see you, to provide advice about nutrition.

Please contact Nursing Staff if any problems arise.

Move! Move! Move!

Adapted from NSW Health – Prevention of Pressure Ulcers Brochure. Accessed at: http://www0.health.nsw.gov.au/resources/quality/pdf/pressure_ulcers_brochure.pdf on 21/12/2012

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