

Patient information

A guide to the prevention of pressure ulcers

This leaflet has been compiled to provide you with information on pressure ulcers (formerly known as pressure sores or bed sores).

It will discuss the main reasons why pressure ulcers develop and aspects of your care that will help to prevent them occurring. Occasionally, there may be reasons why your treatment is different to that mentioned in this leaflet and you should discuss this with your health professional.

What are pressure ulcers?

Pressure ulcers are areas of damage seen on the skin but often involve underlying tissues. They may appear to be minor but can develop into something very serious, affecting deeper tissue, muscle and even bone. They can be very painful and may lead to serious complications and a longer recovery time. Pressure ulcers can develop quickly. Therefore, it is important to prevent them or notice and report early signs of damage.

How are pressure ulcers caused?

There are many causes including direct pressure on the skin and underlying tissue. For example, when lying in bed or sitting in a chair or wheelchair for long periods without changing position, especially if your seat is not wide enough. By chafing or friction perhaps when sliding up and down the bed and rubbing the skin against the sheets.

The signs to look out for are:

- Red/purple/bluish patches on all skin types
- Swollen skin especially over bony areas
- Blisters
- Shiny areas

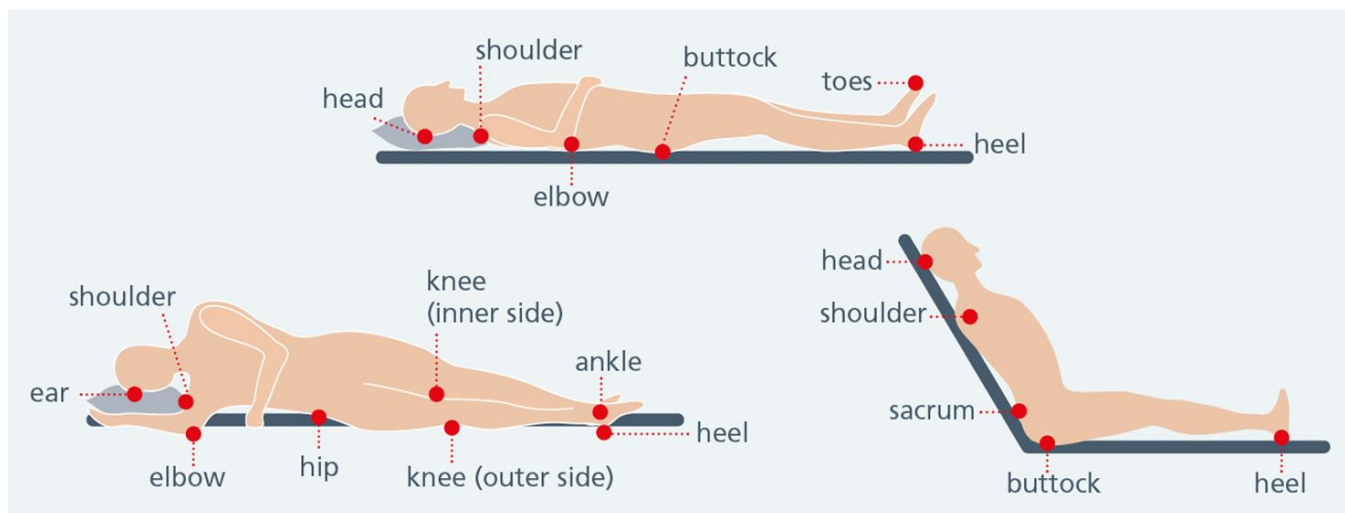
- Hard or dry patches
- Cracks, calluses and wrinkles
- Warm areas.

Relieving the pressure is vital

A schedule of repositioning should be agreed with your nurse, therapist or carer which will include:

- What good seating and lying positions are for you
- How to adjust your seating and lying positions.
- How often you need to move or be moved.
- Which equipment should be used to support this and how.

Areas which are most at risk of developing pressure ulcers



You can be at risk if

- You are spending more time in bed or a chair and moving less than you normally do
- You are drowsy and/or in pain and therefore feel reluctant to move
- You have not had help or any advice from a healthcare professional about good pain relief
- You have an illness or disability that stops you from being mobile
- You are not eating and/or drinking sufficiently
- Your skin is prone to being damp through perspiration or continence issues
- You have a condition which causes reduced sensation.

You (or with your carer's assistance) can help by:

- Changing your position frequently to relieve pressure **at least every two hours**, whether lying or sitting; this makes a great difference
- Ensuring your bedding or seating is free of creases
- Ensuring that your clothing does not have thick seams, zips, studs or buttons which can cause pressure
- Ensuring that your socks are not too tight
- Ensuring that when going on car journeys - to appointments or on holiday to for example, that you take the pressure relieving equipment with you and continue using it while you are away.

If you think you or somebody you care for is at risk of developing pressure ulcers you can get advice and assessment from your local health care team.

Ring the local Care Coordination Centre on 0300 123 2425.

Clinical research

West Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust is actively involved in clinical research. Your doctor, clinical team or the research and development department may contact you regarding specific clinical research studies that you might be interested in participating in. If you do not wish to be contacted for these purposes, please email info.gov@wsh.nsh.uk. This will in no way affect the care or treatment you receive.

Accessibility

If you require this leaflet in a different format, please contact the patient advice and liaison service on 01284 712555 or email PALS@wsh.nhs.uk

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