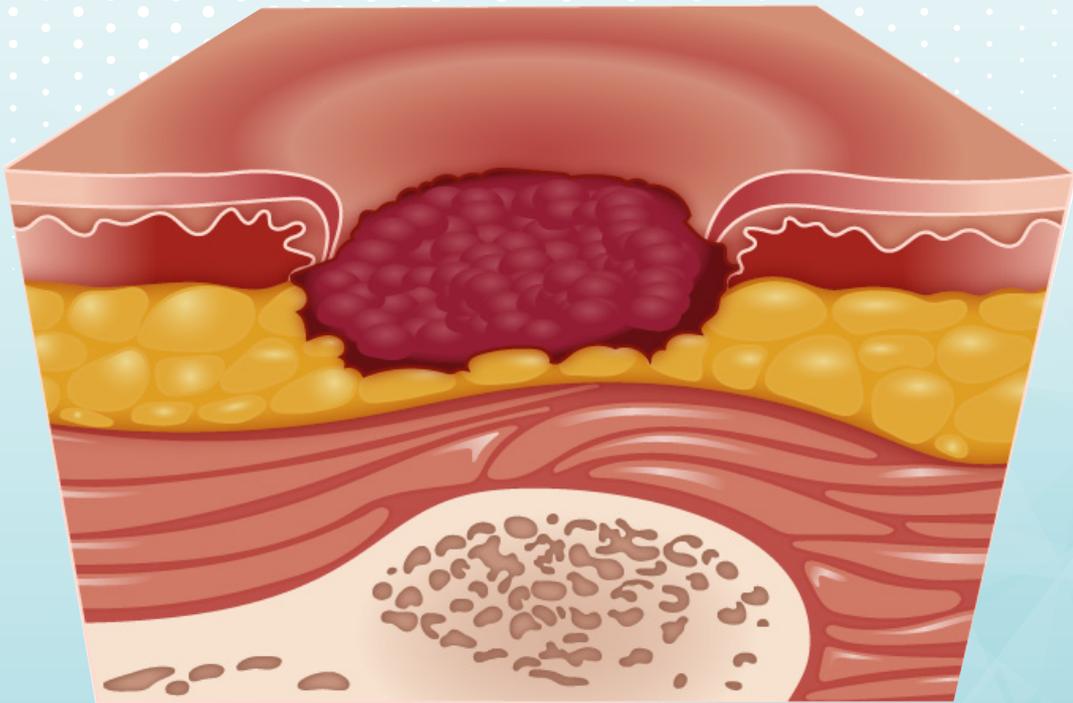


Pressure Ulcer



What's a Pressure Injury?

A pressure injury (a 'bed sore'), is an area of red or broken skin caused by too much pressure, friction, and/or shear on your skin for too long period of time. This pressure cuts off the blood flow to your skin and causes your skin to die.

What are the Signs of a Pressure Injury?

A pressure injury often shows up as a red, warm, tender area that does not go away, or as a blister that is filled with blood or with clear fluid.

Depending on how bad the damage is to the skin and deeper tissue, the skin may also develop a dry, hard, black scab.

Pressure injuries are most often found over 'bony prominences' or areas where our bones seem to stick out more. Such areas include your:

- Tail bone,
- Hip bones,
- Heels,
- Ankles,
- Knees,
- Elbows,
- Spine,
- Ears,
- Back of the head, and;
- Anywhere your skin is under pressure forces.

What puts me at risk for getting a Pressure Injury?

There are many known risk factors for getting a pressure injury. These include:

- Being bed or chair ridden due to illness or injury;
- Having poorly controlled diabetes, heart disease, blood pressure, anemia, and/or chronic lung disease.
- Having a spinal cord injury, multiple sclerosis, or paralysis from stroke;
- Having dementia or Alzheimer's or being confused;
- Being dependent on others to change your position and/or not changing your position often enough.
- Poor fluid and/or food intake.
- Being older.
- Being overweight or underweight, and.
- Having dry skin or skin that is too wet from sweat, wound drainage, saliva, and/ or uncontrolled urine, and/or bowel movements.

What are the risks of having a Pressure Injury?

Having a pressure injury puts you at risk for:

- Being less able to move and complete your activities of daily living;
- Pain, emotional and psychosocial issues/suffering;
- Prolonged hospitalization and delayed discharge to home or long-term care.

Development of more pressure injuries:

- Poor or worsening nutrition;
- Wound infection;
- Blood or bone infection;
- Amputation, and/or;
- Death.

What can I do to help?

You are an important member of your wound care team. To heal your pressure injury and/or to keep new ones from happening:

- Change the dressing as instructed by your doctor and as needed if it gets dirty, falls off, or if it leaks through.
- Recognize the signs of wound infection and get help right away. Signs of infection include: redness/heat/swelling around the wound, increased drainage, drainage that is green or pus and/or foul smelling, increased or new pain, and fever (380C);
- Stop smoking;
- Take your medications as instructed by your doctor;
- Keep your blood sugars in good control (if you have diabetes);
- Get to and/or maintain a healthy weight;
- Change positions at least every hour when in bed, and at least three times per hour when sitting (even if you are on a special mattress or cushion);
- Avoid sitting or lying on the wound;
- Don't massage or rub any warm, red, tender areas;
- Keep your skin clean and dry. Gently cleaning perineal skin at the time of soiling with a mild non-scented soap and warm water;
- Try to establish a toileting routine to prevent urinary and fecal incontinence;
- Use absorbent pads or incontinence products to manage urinary and/or fecal incontinence and to wick moisture away from the skin;
- Avoid long, hot baths—short, warm showers using a mild non-scented soap are preferable;
- Moisturize dry skin regularly with a mild, non-scented moisturizer to keep it from cracking;
- Keep a pillow between your knees and/or ankles to keep them from touching and elevate your heels off of your mattress using a pillow, even if you are on a special mattress;
- Avoid raising the head of the bed greater than 30 degrees, and avoid lying directly on your hips when on your side, i.e. use a 30 degree side lying position;
- Use any specialty mattresses, seating cushions, and other such devices properly and maintain and clean them as per manufacturer's instructions, and;
- Inspect your skin every day for red areas—if there are red areas, check if they are warm, firm, puffy/swollen, or painful. If so, let your health care provider know **IMMEDIATELY**.