

What is a Pressure Ulcer?

Also called bed sores, Pressure Ulcers are injuries to the skin and to deeper layers usually caused when the skin is under pressure. This can happen when skin is 'pressed' between a bone inside the body and an outside surface such as a bed or chair. If the pressure is prolonged it harms the skin. The pressure cuts off the blood supply; this harms cells. You can see this as a red or warm area that may become a scab or wound.

A Pressure Ulcer often begins as a tender, red or warm spot that doesn't go away, and can become quite painful. They usually occur on skin areas one sits or lies on, or on the heels. Often, they are a different or darker color than normal skin. They can become infected, and present a serious problem. Pressure ulcers often occur when a person is ill or unable to move easily.

Key Points for Pressure Ulcer Prevention

- Change position often in bed and at least 3 times each hour when sitting
- Avoid sliding or dragging in and out of the chair or bed. Ask your health care team for tips on how to move and transfer safely
- Ask your health care team about special cushions and beds. They may help to protect you from skin injury if you sit or lie still for long periods
- Keep the skin clean, dry and healthy
- Use barrier ointment to protect skin from urine or other body waste
- Use cream or lotion to protect dry skin
- Inspect and protect fragile skin every day
- Be sure to eat a healthy, balanced diet and drink enough fluids. Ask your health care team for advice
- **KEEP MOVING.** Shift your weight, walk, sit up and stand up. Move as much as you can safely and comfortably do



Key Points for Pressure Ulcer Treatment

- Change position often in bed and at least 3 times each hour when sitting
 - Avoid lying or sitting on the wound
 - An important step to healing is to remove pressure on all bony areas. Talk to your health care team about special wound dressings, cushions or beds, to help ease pain and help heal Pressure Ulcers
 - Do not massage or rub any red, warm or tender area
 - Do not massage any Pressure Ulcer
 - Make the most of good nutrition with a healthy balanced diet. Ask your health care team for guidance. An increase in protein or other nutrients may be needed to promote healing
 - Keep the skin clean, dry and healthy
 - Moisturize and protect dry skin with barrier cream or ointment
 - Inspect and protect fragile skin every day
 - Don't forget, drinking plenty of fluid is very important for wound healing
 - Avoid sliding or dragging in and out of the chair or bed. Ask your health care team for tips on how to move and transfer safely
 - **KEEP MOVING** by shifting your weight, walking, sitting up, standing up, and moving as much as you can safely and comfortably do
 - Follow your health care team's instructions for wound care plus what 'dressing' or bandage you should use for your Pressure Ulcer
 - Report any problems or changes to your health care team as soon as possible
- Your health care team will grade a Pressure Ulcer based on the depth and type of tissue damage, Stage 1 through 4.

DID YOU NOTICE?

Many of the 'Key Points' are on both the prevention AND the treatment list. It is very important to follow these tips as part of your daily routine to prevent Pressure Ulcers or protect healing Pressure Ulcers.

YOU are the core member of the health care team treating you and your wound! These are some of the professionals who can help you and your family and friends in your care and healing:

- Physician
- Nurse / Nurse Specialist
- Physical Therapist
- Occupational Therapist
- Registered Dietician
- Medical Equipment Specialist

Don't forget that a healed Pressure Ulcer is never as strong as your original skin, and must always be protected from pressure and injury.

You can take control of your pressure ulcer and your life!

My Notes:

This pamphlet has been brought to you by the Association for the Advancement of Wound Care (AAWC) through the volunteer support and clinical expertise of the AAWC Public Awareness Task Force.

OUR MISSION

The AAWC exists to be the leader in interdisciplinary wound healing and tissue preservation.

DID YOU KNOW?

AAWC has a variety of membership options. Categories of membership include healthcare providers, facilities and industry members. Membership for people with wounds, their caregivers and patient advocates is free!

PEOPLE WITH WOUNDS NEED A VOICE!

Join today, and encourage your healthcare team to become members. For information, to join or to make a charitable contribution, please call or visit:

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**TAKE the
PRESSURE
OFF!**

*A Patient Guide
for Preventing
and Treating
Pressure Ulcers*