



Sussex Community
NHS Foundation Trust

Pressure Ulcer

Information leaflet
for patients/carers





What is a pressure ulcer?

A pressure ulcer is a form of damage to the skin and underlying tissue. It is also known as 'pressure soars' or 'bed sores'.

If untreated it can get worse and seriously affect a person's health and delay their recovery.

Fortunately, most pressure ulcers can be prevented.

What causes pressure ulcers?

A pressure ulcer is caused by a combination of:

Pressure: normal body weight can squash the skin and damage the blood supply to the area. Lying or sitting in one position for a long time can cause this.

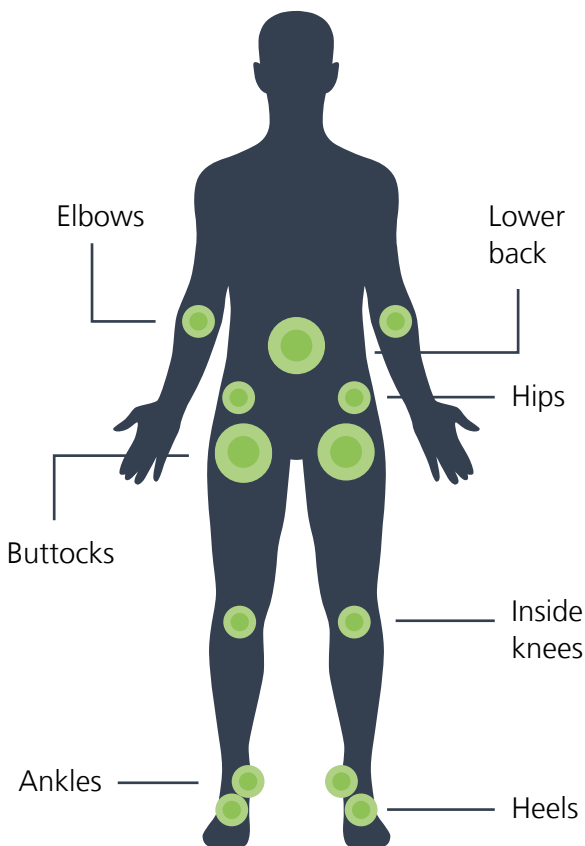
Slipping/sliding down a bed or chair: can damage the skin and deeper layers of tissue.

Moisture: urine, faeces and sweat can irritate the skin making it breakdown more easily.

What parts of the body can get a pressure ulcer?

A pressure ulcer can develop anywhere on the body but are mostly found over bony areas such as heels, elbows, hips, bottoms, spine and ankles.

They may also occur from items pressing into the skin such as, tubing from equipment, glasses, or material folds or buttons from clothing.



Who is most at risk of developing a pressure ulcer?

You may be at risk of developing a pressure ulcer for a number of reasons including:

- Problems with movement.
- Poor circulation.
- Some conditions and some treatments may reduce your sensitivity to pain or discomfort which means you are less likely to move or notice pressure damage developing.
- Inadequate diet or fluid intake.
- Older skin being thinner and slower to heal.

People with these issues who then become suddenly unwell are extremely vulnerable of pressure ulcer development.

Early signs of a pressure ulcer

- Pain or discomfort in the skin of any area under pressure, or over a bony area.
- Cracked or weeping skin.
- Change in skin colour. Skin may develop reddened areas. Patients with darkly pigmented skin may develop a purple/blue patch.
- Hot or cold patches.
- Blistering.

Without treatment the damage may get worse, developing into hard, black skin or becoming an open wound.

How can you prevent a pressure ulcer?

Your healthcare team will assess your general health which will help them establish if you are at risk of developing a pressure ulcer. If necessary, the relevant preventative care will be planned.

However, you can also do the following things to help prevent developing a pressure ulcer:

Move

- Change your position regularly.
- Use the flat of your foot not your heel when pushing yourself up the bed.
- If you have difficulty moving, ask for help.

Look

Check your skin for signs of a pressure ulcer at least once a day.

Report

Tell a nurse or carer if you are experiencing pain or discomfort in any area of skin.

Protect

Wash your skin every day using a mild soap and warm water.

Inform

Tell your healthcare team if you suffer from incontinence as they can provide pads to prevent soreness.

Nutrition

Make sure you eat a balanced diet and drink plenty of fluids.

Advice and support

We hope that this leaflet will make you aware of how to recognise early signs of a pressure ulcer developing and the steps you can take to prevent it from occurring.

If you feel you need more information or have any concerns please contact your GP or community nurses.

Contact details for your community nurse are:

Get the best from your NHS

Our patient advice and liaison service (PALS) can help patients, families and carers with questions, comments or concerns about NHS services. If you need advice about our services, facilities or staff, or would like to make a comment, please contact PALS at:



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Please ask any member of the team caring for you if you need this information in large print, Braille, easy read, audio tape, email. Or if you need help with understanding this information or require this in a language that is not English.



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heart of the community*