



PREVENTING AND MANAGING PRESSURE INJURIES

What is a pressure injury?

A pressure injury is an injury to an area of skin or the soft tissue underneath. These nearly always develop in places where there are bones right under the skin. Pressure injuries may also be called bedsores, pressure sores, or pressure ulcers.

The injury can occur on the surface of the skin, or it can be very deep. Pressure injuries are categorised into different stages or levels of severity.

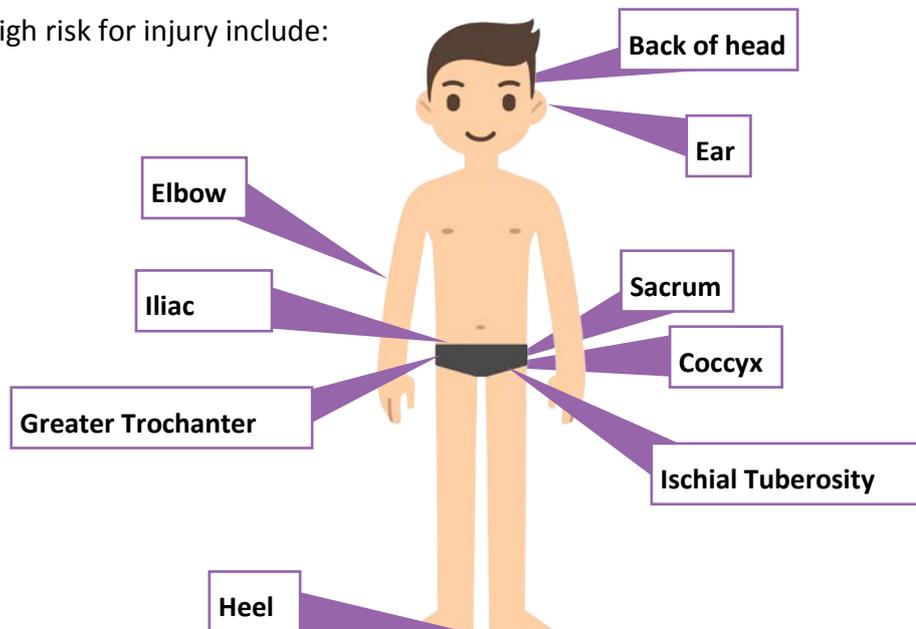
Pressure injuries are serious challenges to health, mobility and the ability to participate in activity. These injuries can be very difficult to heal and can often recur. Many people require hospital treatment because of a pressure injury and can spend long periods of time hospitalised or immobile. Because of this it's vital to prevent pressure injuries whenever possible.

How does it happen?

There are many different thoughts about what causes a pressure injury. Some common reasons include:

Pressure	When something is pressed up against the skin (too hard or for too long)
Friction	Rubbing against the skin, e.g. sheets or clothing rubbing during transfers
Shear	When skin or tissue is pulled, squashed or stretched out of its normal shape

Body parts at high risk for injury include:



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Am I at risk?

You could be particularly at risk of a pressure injury if you:

- Spend a lot of time in a sitting or lying position
- Are unable to regularly change position by yourself
- Can't feel pain or discomfort in parts of your body
- Have areas of your skin that are often damp or moist (e.g. from sweat or urine)
- Are particularly skinny or bony, or if you are really heavy
- Have poor circulation

What should I look out for?

Look for an area of redness (on pale skin) or a purple tinge (on darker skin) that stays that same when pressed rather than turning white, or "blanching". This can indicate a Stage I pressure injury. If the skin is broken, blistered or scraped, it could be a Stage II injury.

What do I do if I notice a pressure injury forming?

- Take pressure away from the area as much as possible. Keep the area dry.
- Talk to your doctor or pressure care nurse about ways to manage the wound site.
- Talk to your occupational therapist or physiotherapist to see if you can change what you sit or lie on or how you are positioned.

How can I reduce my chances of getting a pressure injury?

Check skin daily	Check for red or purple areas that don't blanch (turn white) when you press on them. Use a mirror to check behind you, or get someone else to check for you.
Regularly change position	You need to make a big change in position. If lying down, change from side to side. If sitting down, a standing wheelchair is great. If you can't stand, tilt back in your wheelchair using tilt-in-space – you need to tilt quite far back and stay there for at least 5 minutes!
Take care of your skin	Eat well, drink enough fluids, and keep your skin clean and dry. Avoid stretching or pulling on the skin. Avoid sitting or lying on creases or folds (e.g. in clothing).

Pressure care products can help reduce pressure risk using one of the following principles:

Offloading	Removes pressure from high-risk areas and puts it instead on more tolerant body surfaces like the thighs or back. <i>Product options:</i> cushions with wells, alternating air mattresses, turning beds
Pressure redistribution	These products immerse the person into the surface, which means that there is a greater area for pressure to be distributed over. <i>Product options:</i> cushions and mattresses with soft, conforming surfaces.

*This information is designed for educational purposes and does not constitute medical advice. Please consult your health professional.

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