

The following increase the risk for pressure ulcers:

1. Inability to change positions
2. Continuous or periodic loss of bowel and/or bladder control
3. Poor nutrition and hydration
4. Lowered mental awareness

Pressure ulcers are serious problems and can lead to:

1. Pain
2. Slower recovery from health problems
3. Possible complications such as infection

But they may be preventable

By assisting your health care team in lowering your risk factors, most pressure ulcers can be prevented.

If you or your loved one are receiving Hospice and/or Palliative care, it is important that you discuss the goals of care for pressure ulcer management and prevention with your health care provider. When turning and repositioning during end-of-life care, the goal should be comfort, thus the turning schedule should be made in consultation with you and/or your family.

Be Active in Your Health Care!

Reduce your risk of getting pressure ulcers. Get your family and health care team involved in pressure ulcer prevention.

Be sure that you:

- Ask questions
- Explain your needs, wants, and concerns
- Understand what and why things are being done
- Know what is best for you
- Find out how you can help prevent pressure ulcers
 - in the nursing home
 - in the hospital
 - and at home

The information presented in this brochure is intended as a guideline based on evidence-based research and best practices. TMF Health Quality Institute does not promote one method over another for all settings.

Help Us Protect.....



Your Skin

Informing you and your family about **pressure ulcers** and how you can assist your health care providers in preventing them.

When you or your family member were admitted to this facility, nurses performed a skin assessment. This assessment indicates that you are at risk for developing a pressure ulcer.

What is a pressure ulcer?

A pressure ulcer, sometimes called a "bedsore," is injury to the skin and underlying tissue usually caused by unrelieved pressure.

These ulcers usually occur on the shoulders, elbows, hips, buttocks, and heels (areas found over bony parts of the body that sustain pressure when lying in bed or sitting for long periods of time). They begin as reddened areas, but can damage skin and muscles if not treated promptly.

What causes a pressure ulcer?

Pressure ulcers occur by unrelieved pressure on the skin squeezing tiny blood vessels which supply the skin with nutrients and oxygen. When the skin is starved of nutrients and oxygen for too long, the tissue dies and a pressure ulcer forms.

Pressure ulcers can also be caused by sliding down in a bed or chair. This stretches or bends blood vessels, causing pressure ulcers. Even slight rubbing or friction on the skin may cause minor pressure ulcers that can quickly worsen.

Keys steps to pressure ulcer prevention

Protect your skin from injury:

Limit Pressure

- If you are in bed, your position should be changed at least every two hours.
- If you are in a chair, your position should be changed at least every hour. If you are able to shift your own weight, you should do so every 15 minutes while sitting.

Reduce Friction

- When shifting position or moving in your bed, don't pull or drag yourself across the sheets. Also, don't push or pull with your heels.
- Avoid repetitive movements such as rubbing your foot on the sheets to scratch an itchy spot.
- Avoid the use of doughnut-shaped cushions - they can actually cause injury to deep tissues.

Take care of your skin:

- Allow a member of your health care team to inspect your skin at least once per day.
- If you notice any abnormal areas, notify your nurse as soon as possible.
- Your skin should be cleaned thoroughly as soon as possible after soiling.
- Prevent dry skin by using creams or oils.
- Don't rub or massage skin over bony parts of your body.

Safeguard your skin from moisture:

- Use absorbent pads while in bed and briefs while out of bed that pull moisture away from your body.
- Apply a cream or ointment to protect your skin from urine and/or stool.

If you are confined to bed for long periods of time:

- Talk to your nurse about getting a special mattress or overlay.
- Try to keep the head of your bed as low as possible (unless other medical conditions do not permit it). If you need to raise the head of the bed for certain activities, try to raise it to the lowest point possible for as short a time as possible.
- Pillows or foam wedges should be used to keep your knees or ankles from touching each other.
- Avoid lying directly on your hip bone when lying on your side. Also, a position that spreads weight and pressure more evenly should be chosen if possible - pillows may help.
- If you cannot move at all, pillows should be placed under your legs from mid-calf to ankle to keep your heels off the bed. Never place pillows behind the knee.

If you are in a chair or wheelchair:

- Talk to your nurse about getting a chair cushion to reduce pressure while sitting.
- Remember that comfort and good posture are important.

Improve your ability to move:

- Ask your nurse if you qualify for a rehabilitation program designed to help you regain independence and improve movement.