

- Do not continue to lie on skin that is redder or darker than usual.
- Protect your skin by washing every day by using warm water or skin cleansers.
- Avoid using heavily perfumed soap or talcum powder, as these can soak up the skins natural oils leading to vulnerable dry areas of skin.
- If you suffer from incontinence, let your nursing team know as they can provide pads and barrier preparations to prevent soreness.

What to lookout for:

- red patches on light skinned people,
- bluish/purple patches on dark skinned people,
- blisters or damage to the skin,
- patches of hot skin,
- swelling,
- patches of hard skin,
- patches of cool skin.

Ask a carer or a member of the nursing team if you have any concerns.

What should I do if I develop a pressure ulcer?

Tell your doctor or nurse as soon as possible. and follow the advice they give to you.

Useful websites for further information

- **Patient Advice and Liason Service (PALS)**

Phone: 0800 011 6113
www.hertschs.nhs.uk/contact/PALS

- **The Patients Association**

Phone: 0845 608 4455
www.patients-association.com

- **National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE)**

Phone: 0845 003 7780
www.nice.org.uk

Hertfordshire Community NHS Trust

Unit 1a Howard Court
 14 Tewin Road
 Welwyn Garden City
 Hertfordshire
 AL7 1BW

Telephone: 01707 388000
 Fax: 01707 321840
 Email: communications@hchs.nhs.uk
 Web: www.hertschs.nhs.uk

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Prevention of Pressure Ulcers

Information for patients



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A pressure ulcer is sometimes known as pressure sores or bed sores which is an area of damage to the skin and underlying tissue.

What causes pressure ulcers?

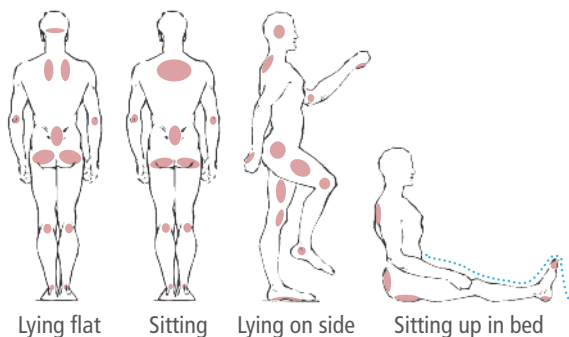
Usually an ulcer would be caused by sitting or lying in one position for too long without moving, or by rubbing or dragging your skin across a surface.

Where is a pressure ulcer most likely to appear?

They are most likely to develop on the bony parts of the body which take your weight and where the bone is close to the surface.

A pressure ulcer can develop in only a few hours and usually starts with the skin becoming slightly redder, warmer or darker than normal. This can go on to become a blister or an open wound.

Common sites for pressure ulcers



Who is most at risk of developing pressure ulcers?

You are most likely to get a pressure ulcer if:

- you have to stay in bed,
- you spend long periods sitting still in a chair,
- you have difficulty moving and are unable to change position,
- you are elderly or weak,
- you have a serious illness,
- you have poor circulation,
- you cannot feel pain over part or all of the body, for example because you are diabetic or have had a stroke,
- you have a poor diet or are not drinking enough,
- you have had a pressure ulcer in the past,

People who are incontinent are at risk of developing moisture lesions which can be mistaken for pressure ulcers.

What can I expect from my healthcare professional?

An assessment within six hours of admission if you are in a community hospital bed or on the first visit by a community nurse to your home. This will be to identify your risk of developing pressure ulcers.

The nursing team will examine you and ask you some questions. This will help to establish the relevant preventative care that should be put into place.

This may include:

- pressure relieving cushions and/or mattresses,
- regular re-assessment of your skin and any changes in your general health,
- advice on how often you should change position (if you have limited movement the nursing team will assist you or arrange for you to have regular repositioning),
- advice on a well balanced diet and fluid intake,
- advice on skin protection that will prevent your skin from becoming red and sore.

What can I do to help myself?

- Change your position regularly, this will help to prevent the build up of pressure.
- Eat a well balanced diet e.g fish, meat, eggs, and try to drink plenty of fluids.
- If you are immobile but sitting in a chair, try to lift your weight from side to side to relieve the pressure on your bottom.
- If you have your legs stretched out in front of you ensure your feet are resting flat on the floor.
- If you are mobile get up and walk around as often as you feel able or at least every two hours.
- If you are able to, check for signs of damage at least once a day. A mirror may help you to do this by looking for skin that doesn't go back to its normal colour after you have taken your weight off it.