

Preventing Pressure Ulcers or Bed Sores

Keeping Your Skin Healthy In the Hospital



As partners in your care, this brochure will help you, your care givers and care helpers learn how to prevent pressure ulcers (also called bed sores).

What is a pressure ulcer?

A pressure ulcer is a break in the skin caused by:

- constant pressure on the same area of skin
- pulling skin across a surface called friction
- sliding skin on a surface called shear



Your Safety and Waffle Boots

You can sit at the side of the bed with boots on.



× Do not walk on boots.



Drink fluids

- The amount of fluid you should drink depends on your medical condition. For example people with heart failure or kidney disease need to control the amount of fluid they drink.
- The dietitian can advise you on how much fluid to drink and the type of fluids to drink to help you optimize your skin health.

Control pain

- If you have pain, it is important to get your pain under control so you can move the best you can.

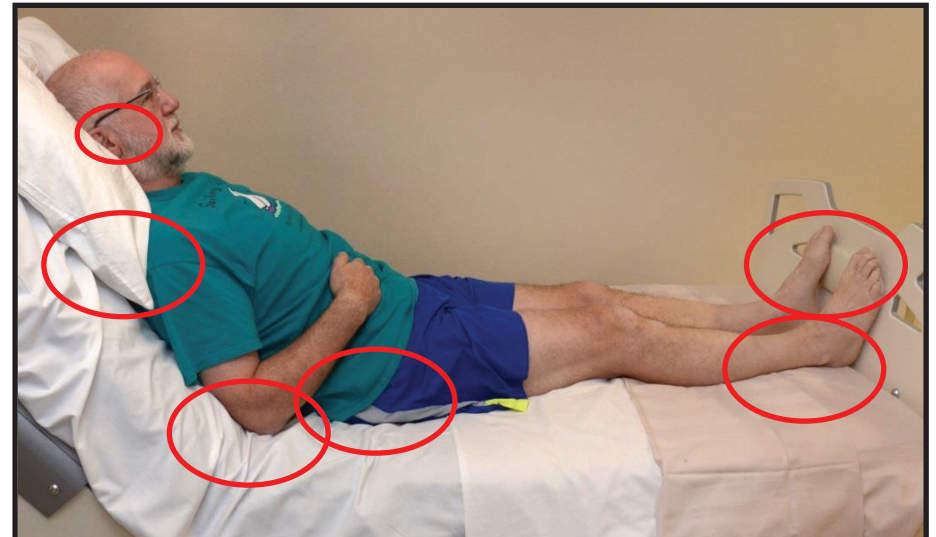
Work with your health care team to find the best way to control pain for you.

We are here to help

If you feel that you or your loved one is at risk for getting a pressure ulcer or bed sore, talk to member of your health care team to make a prevention plan.

A pressure ulcer most often develops on skin over a bony area. Common places for pressure ulcers to start are over the heels, elbows, buttocks (bottom or bum), hips, shoulder blades, back of head and ears.

These high risk areas are shown in this picture.



A pressure ulcer can start in a very short time.

Some pressure ulcers can start in hours or days of being in the hospital.

Prevention is best.

Why is it important to have good skin health and prevent a pressure ulcer?

After a pressure ulcer starts, it can worsen quickly and/or take a long time to heal.

A pressure ulcer can change your life in many ways. For example, when you have a pressure ulcer you may:

- have pain that persists and is hard to control
- need special care and dressings often more than once a day
- need to change your daily activities, work, school and other things you like to do
- develop an infection or illness due to the pressure ulcer

Getting a pressure ulcer can slow your recovery and increase your time in hospital.

Protect your skin

- Use gentle soap and water or pH balanced cleansers to clean your skin and keep it dry.
- Use lotion to prevent dry skin and cracking. Avoid using lotions with perfumes or scents as these can dry skin more.

Follow a healthy diet

- A healthy diet includes having a balance of protein, vitamins, minerals and fats. Try to eat meat, fish, vegetables, fruit and fibre.
- Protein from meat, fish, eggs and dairy products promote good skin health and healing.
- You can ask to talk to a dietitian to make sure your diet is balanced and healthy. You can talk to the dietitian about adding protein supplements if needed.

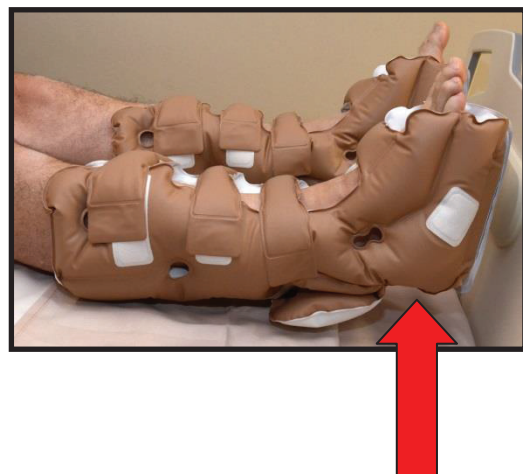
Keep moving

- It is important to keep moving and exercise. Many members of your health care team can help. Ask to see a therapist to learn how to move around safely. You can talk about the benefits of moving and how to increase your activity.

- Here is another example of floating the feet off the bed using pillows.



- Waffle boots are an example of a device.



Floating feet off bed.

What are the risk factors?

The main risk factors that can lead to a pressure ulcer include:

Limited ability to move:

- This means you are not able to move easily due to illness or a medical condition such as a stroke. When you cannot move well, your blood has trouble bringing water and nutrition to the skin cells. Your skin needs these to live.

Incontinence:

- This means you have problems with bowel and/or bladder control. For example, when urine and/or feces sits on the skin bacteria grows and causes skin breakdown.

Poor nutrition:

- This means you do not get enough nutrients in your diet for good skin health. Skin cells need a healthy diet to survive, reproduce and do their job of protecting you.

Friction or shear:

- This happens when skin is pulled or slid against a surface such as a bed sheet or mattress. It is important to use the proper techniques when helping you move in bed to avoid this risk factor.

As a partner in my care, what can I do to help prevent a pressure ulcer?

Your care team wants to help you keep your skin healthy. You and your care helpers can help.

Check skin daily

- Check your skin for red areas, blisters, bruises or darkened areas of the skin that may feel hard, warm and/or painful especially over bony areas.
- Pay special attention to skin over bony areas as shown in the picture.
- Let a member of your health care team know if you see an area on your skin that you are concerned about.

Prevent Pressure

- Move around and change positions as often as you can. Do this at least every 2 hours when you are awake in bed or when sitting. If you are not able to move by yourself, ask for help.
- When sitting in a chair or wheelchair, shift your weight and change position often. This helps blood move around and bring water and nutrition to your skin cells.

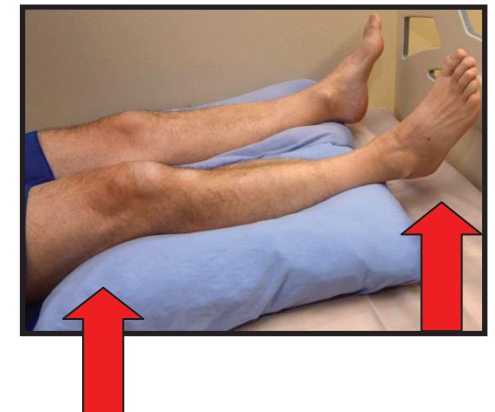
If you can move around on your own, get up or move in bed carefully. Avoid sliding or pulling yourself across sheets.

- Avoid rubbing over bony areas.
- While in hospital, talk to a member of your health care team about having a special mattress if you cannot move in bed very well or on your own.

- Avoid lying directly on your hips, back and buttocks. Turn to your sides and support your knees with pillows as shown in the picture.



- Use pillows or devices to reduce pressure on the heels and ankles by floating them off the bed as shown in the picture.



- **Make sure all pillows extend above the knees.**