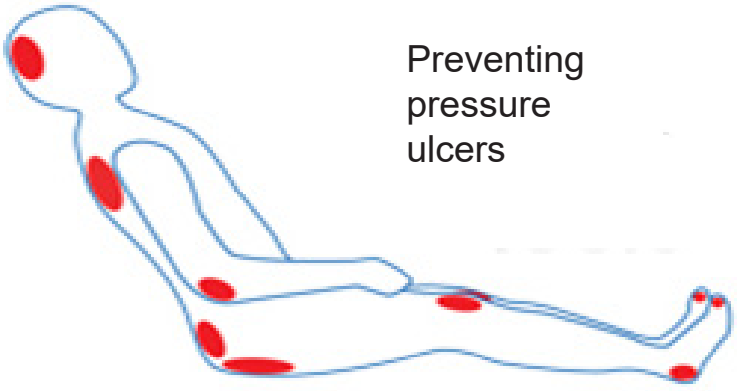
Calderdale and Huddersfield
NHS Foundation Trust

Tissue Viability

How to Prevent Pressure Ulcers
Information for Patients, Families and Carers



This leaflet will explain what pressure ulcers (sometimes known as bedsores or pressure sores) are and describe the common causes and steps that can be taken to reduce them.

A pressure ulcer can seriously impact the quality of your life and it's important to understand whether you may be at risk, so you can help prevent a pressure ulcer from developing.

compassionate care

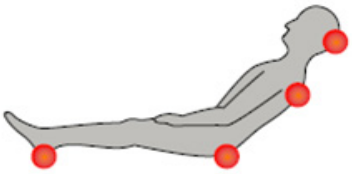
What is a pressure ulcer?

A pressure ulcer is an area of damage to the skin and underlying tissue.

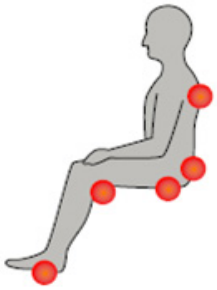
The first sign that a pressure ulcer may be forming is usually discoloured skin, which may get progressively worse and eventually lead to an open wound.

The most common places for pressure ulcers to occur are over bony prominences (where bones are close to the surface of the skin).

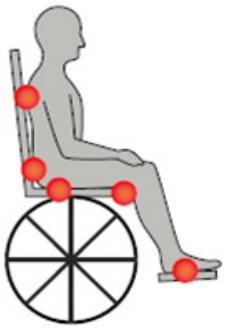
The images below show areas where pressure ulcers can often form:



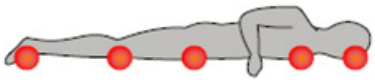
Sitting up in bed



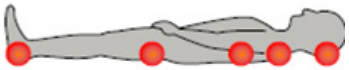
Sitting up in a chair



Sitting up in a wheelchair



Lying on your side



Lying on your back

Causes

Pressure ulcers develop when the blood supply to an area of skin is disrupted.

A lack of blood supply means that oxygen and nutrients don't reach the area as they should, and this causes the skin to break down and an ulcer to form.

They occur when an area of the body is placed under pressure for any length of time, and are more likely if a person has to stay in bed, in a chair or in a wheelchair for long periods of time, or is unable to move around or change position easily.

Apart from continued pressure on an area, the following may cause pressure ulcers:

- sliding or slumping down the bed or chair – this can damage the skin and the deep layers of tissue underneath (known as 'shearing')
- poor moving and handling methods can remove the top layers of skin and create friction, which if applied repeatedly can increase the risk of pressure damage.

The early signs of pressure damage

You may notice one or more of the following:

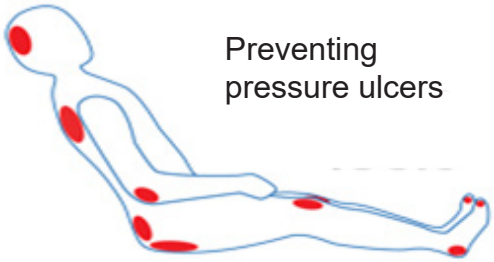
- changes in skin colour (turning red or dark)
- a feeling of heat or cold in the area
- swelling
- discomfort or pain
- blistering
- other skin damage

Who is at risk of developing a pressure ulcer?

Anyone, whatever their age or mobility, can develop a pressure ulcer but some people are at greater risk than others.

You may be at greater risk if you:

- currently have a pressure ulcer or have had one in the past
- are unable to move certain parts of your body, or change position by yourself
- are seriously ill or undergoing surgery
- have had an injury, for example a broken hip
- have conditions such as diabetes, stroke and nerve or muscle disorders that may reduce sensitivity to pain and discomfort
- have had an epidural or medications which may reduce your ability to move and your sensitivity to pain
- have a poor appetite/diet or do not drink enough fluids
- have a plaster cast applied to a limb
- are elderly or very young
- have existing broken skin
- have poor circulation
- are incontinent



Preventing pressure ulcers

What to expect

To assess your risk of developing pressure ulcers, a member of your healthcare team will examine your skin and ask you some questions. This will help us to identify whether you require specialised equipment or other forms of care, and will enable us to provide for your individual needs.

Skin inspection

Your care will include your skin to be examined frequently by a nurse for early signs of damage in all of the areas that are at risk of developing pressure ulcers.

This visual inspection is important because damage can often be seen before it is felt, and because there are some areas of the body which you are unable to see yourself (such as the bottom and back).

By regularly examining your skin, it may be possible for us to identify problems that you're not aware of yet, and act promptly to address them. If damage is identified early we can generally prevent it from getting worse. How often your skin will be examined depends on your level of risk and your general health.

Prevention

One of the best ways of preventing a pressure ulcer is to reduce or relieve pressure on the areas at risk by moving around and changing position as much as possible. If you already have a pressure ulcer, lying or sitting on the ulcer should be avoided as this will make it worse.

At this hospital if you are assessed as being at moderate or high risk of developing pressure damage due to your current condition and skin health, you'll be placed on a repositioning plan. This involves your care worker coming to you every two to four hours to prompt or assist you in changing your position, helping you go to the toilet if required and ensuring you have a drink available.

Changing position every two hours ensures the blood flow to the area under pressure has enough time to return to normal. So even if you're sitting in the chair you'll be encouraged to stay there for a maximum of two to four hours at any one time (sitting in a chair for long periods of time can increase the risk of pressure ulcers developing in the same way that staying in bed can).

Ways to relieve pressure while you are in bed

Some of the steps that can be taken to reduce pressure while you're in bed are explained below.

Your healthcare team will be able to help you with these.

Pillows can be used to relieve any pressure from areas likely to be at risk of developing damage:

Your heels will be raised using a pillow lengthways under each leg to ensure no pressure is applied to your heels or ankles.



Pillows will also be placed in the small of your back to tilt you over approximately 30 degrees (rather than you lying completely on your side).



Air mattresses and cushions

If your condition puts you at increased risk of developing pressure damage, you may be placed on an air mattress and/or air cushion. These devices feature an automatically regulated airflow able to reduce or redistribute pressure over areas of the body as required. However, we'll still need to reposition you every two hours.

What you can do to help avoid pressure damage

Keep moving

It's important to keep moving as much as possible.

You should:

- Try to reposition yourself (if you're able to) every two hours. If you need help to do this, let your healthcare team know, and ensure that they are aware if you have been in the same position for longer than two hours.
- Sit out in your chair for a maximum of two hours at any one time before getting onto the bed, tilted to one side to relieve the pressure.
- If you are able to move independently, we recommend that you get up and have a walk every 15-30 minutes.

Eat well and stay hydrated

Eating and drinking well is important for everyone, but especially for those at risk of developing pressure damage. Make sure you eat a healthy, balanced diet and drink plenty of fluids, and extra protein may help. Meat, fish, eggs and beans are all good sources of protein.

If you're concerned about your nutrition please talk to a member of your team. You may be referred to a dietitian for assessment and advice.

If you have an existing pressure ulcer then you may be prescribed supplements to help with wound healing.

Your healthcare team will talk you through the information contained in this leaflet and if you have any questions don't hesitate to ask.

If you're concerned that you may have or are developing any pressure damage, you should inform a member of your healthcare team immediately.

If you have any comments about this leaflet or the service you have received you can contact :

Tissue Viability Office

Phone: 01484 355396
E-mail: TVNReferral@cht.nhs.uk

www.cht.nhs.uk

If you would like this information in another format or language contact the above.

Potřebujete-li tyto informace v jiném formátu nebo jazyce, obraťte se prosím na výše uvedené oddělení

Jeżeli są Państwo zainteresowani otrzymaniem tych informacji w innym formacie lub wersji językowej, prosimy skontaktować się z nami, korzystając z ww. danych kontaktowych

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਪ੍ਰਾਰੂਪ ਜਾਂ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿੱਚ ਲੈਣਾ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ,
ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਉਪਰੋਕਤ ਵਿਭਾਗ ਵਿੱਚ ਸਾਡੇ ਨਾਲ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੋ।

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی اور فارمیٹ یا زبان میں درکار ہوں، تو
براۂے میہربانی مندرجہ بالا شعبے میں ہم سے رابطہ کریں۔

"إذا احتجت الحصول على هذه المعلومة بشكل مغاير أو مترجمة إلى لغة مختلفة فيرجى منك الاتصال بالقسم المذكور أعلاه"