

# Pressure ulcer prevention FAQs

**Q: What is a Pressure Ulcer?**

A: A pressure ulcer is damage to the skin and underlying tissue. There are three ways you can get a pressure ulcer:

1. Prolonged pressure, which reduces the blood flow to that area
2. Shear, which occurs when the layers of your skin slide over each other or deeper tissue. For example, when you slide down in bed.
3. Friction, which occurs when there is rubbing of the skin.

**Q: Where would I develop a pressure ulcer?**

A: The most common places for a pressure ulcer to happen are your tailbone, shoulder blades, elbows, knees, heels, hips, and back of the head. (Please see the picture on page 2)

**Q: What does a pressure ulcer look like?**

A: At first, a pressure ulcer may appear to be a red area that does not fade when pressure is removed. This can progress to an open wound with damage to the skin, muscle, and bone.

**Q: Who is at high risk of getting a pressure ulcer?**

A: Anyone who:

- Is in one position for a long period of time.
- Has difficulty with their bladder and/or bowel control.
- Has difficulty feeling parts of their body.
- Is not getting the right number of calories and nutrients, such as protein and fat in their diet.

**Q: What can I do to prevent a pressure ulcer?**

A: The following steps will help you prevent a pressure ulcer.

**Positioning**

- Change your position frequently when lying in bed.
- Try to avoid sliding up and down in bed. This movement can cause your skin to tear or blister and increase your chance of getting a pressure ulcer.
- Do not lie directly on your hipbone. This area is known as a bony prominence and the pressure when lying on this bone can cause a pressure ulcer.
- Unless your doctor says otherwise, when lying on your side, keep pillows between your ankles and knees, this will help to reduce pressure.
- Do not sit on a “donut” ring shaped pillow. This increases the amount of pressure to that area. If you cannot reposition yourself, ask for help in changing your position at least once every two hours.

**Skin Care**

Moist skin can increase your chance of getting a pressure ulcer. If your skin is moist, please let your nurse know. Clean, dry skin is important in preventing a pressure ulcer.

*See reverse for more information*

Do not use talcum powder or harsh soaps. Talcum powder can cake between skin folds and cause friction. Inspect or have someone inspect your skin daily for signs of redness, warmth, or changes in your skin. Promptly notify your healthcare provider if you have any of these. If you have a pressure ulcer do not lie on that area as this will make it worse.

## Nutrition

A well-balanced diet and drinking plenty of fluids is important in disease prevention. If you have questions about your diet, please ask any member of your care team.

### Sitting

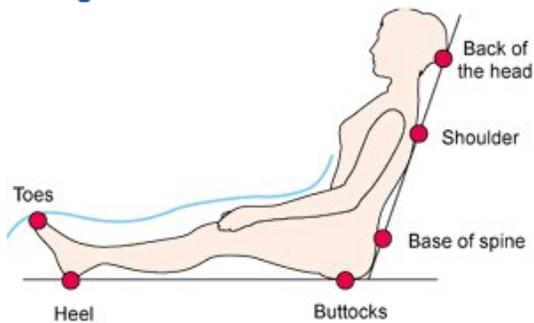
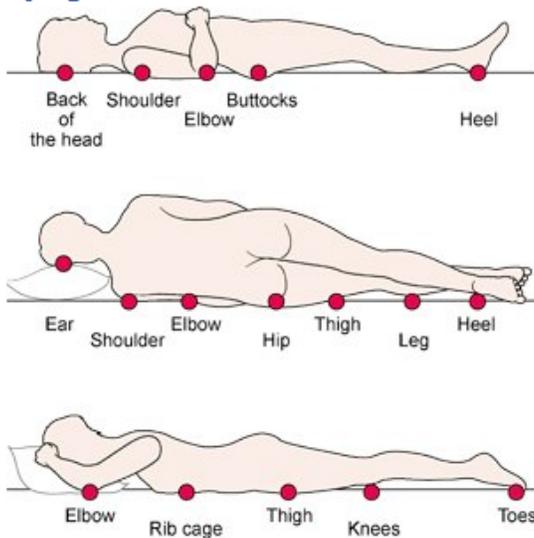


Diagram showing areas of the body at risk of pressure sores when sitting

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Original diagram by the Tissue Viability Society

### Lying



For more information, please contact:

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