

What can I do to avoid pressure ulcers?

There are several ways you can reduce the risk of pressure ulcers.

Keep moving

Changing your position regularly will help to protect your skin. **Try to change your position at least every two (2) hours.**

Protect your skin

Wash your skin using warm water and soap then dry thoroughly. Do not use heavily perfumed soap or talcum powder, as these can soak up the skin's natural oils leading to vulnerable dry areas. **If you notice that you cannot get up or move around as easily, speak to your GP.**

Eat a well-balanced diet

Make sure you eat a healthy balanced diet and drink plenty of fluids.

Look for signs of damage

Check your skin for pressure damage at least once a day. Look for skin that doesn't go back to its normal colour after you have taken your weight off it. Do not continue to lie on skin that is redder or darker than usual. Also watch out for blisters, dry patches or breaks in the skin. Ask someone for help to check.

What should I do if I suspect a pressure ulcer?

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

Other things you can speak to your GP about:

- Continence.
- Increasing difficulty in moving around.
- Increasing falling over.



If you or someone you care for falls over and cannot get up, you are at risk of getting a pressure sore: **Call for help to get up.**

For further information on pressure area care, please visit Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust website: www.berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk

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What happens if you don't move around enough....

A guide for people on how to reduce the risk of skin breakdown

This leaflet contains general information.
If you are concerned, please speak to your GP

What is a pressure ulcer?

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

They are sometimes known as pressure sores or bed sores.

What causes a pressure ulcer

Pressure ulcers are caused by poor circulation to tissues due to a combination of the following factors.

- Body weight e.g. sitting or lying too long can squash the skin and other tissues where parts are under pressure. This reduces the blood supply to the area and can lead to tissue damage.
- Sliding or slumping down the bed/chair can damage the skin and deeper layers of tissue.

Who is most at risk of developing pressure ulcers?

You may be at risk of developing pressure ulcers for a number of reasons including the following.

Problems with movement

- If your ability to move is limited you don't get enough oxygen to the parts under pressure.

Poor circulation

Heart disease or smoking reduces your circulation.

Moist skin

You may be at increased risk if your skin is too damp. It is important that your skin is kept clean and healthy.

Previous tissue damage

Scar tissue will have lost some of its previous strength and is more prone to breakdown.

Being over or underweight

Weight gain or loss can affect the pressure distribution over parts of the body. Inadequate diet or fluid intake can make you dehydrated.

What are the early signs of a pressure ulcer?

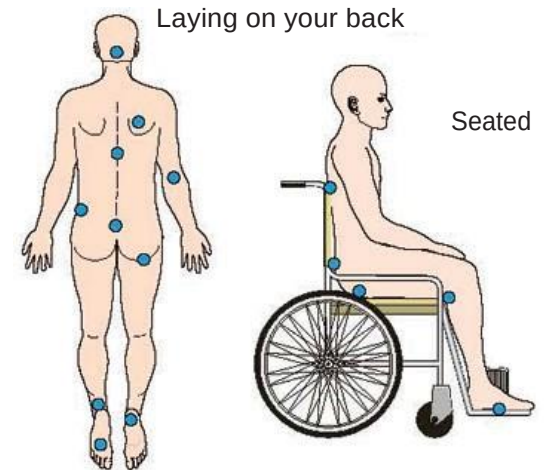
You will notice the following signs:

- *change in skin colour, redder or darker*
- *heat or cold*
- *discomfort or pain*
- *blistering*
- *skin damage.*

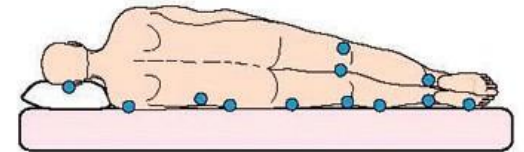
Without appropriate intervention the damage may worsen, developing into an open wound.

Please seek advice from your surgery.

Common locations of pressure ulcers



Laying on your side



Reference: Whiting NL (2009) Skin assessment of patients at risk of pressure ulcers. Nursing Standard vol 24 no. 10 pages 40 - 44