

Preventing pressure ulcers

Pressure ulcer multidisciplinary team

Patient Information



What is a pressure ulcer?

A pressure ulcer (previously known as a bed sore) is an area of damaged skin that is usually caused by sitting or lying in the same position for too long. A lack of blood circulating to this area of skin causes it to become an open wound. Medical devices, for example oxygen masks or tubing could cause pressure ulcers too if pressing onto your skin.

A pressure ulcer can be painful, distressing and could lead to a longer recovery or stay in hospital.

Have you checked your skin?

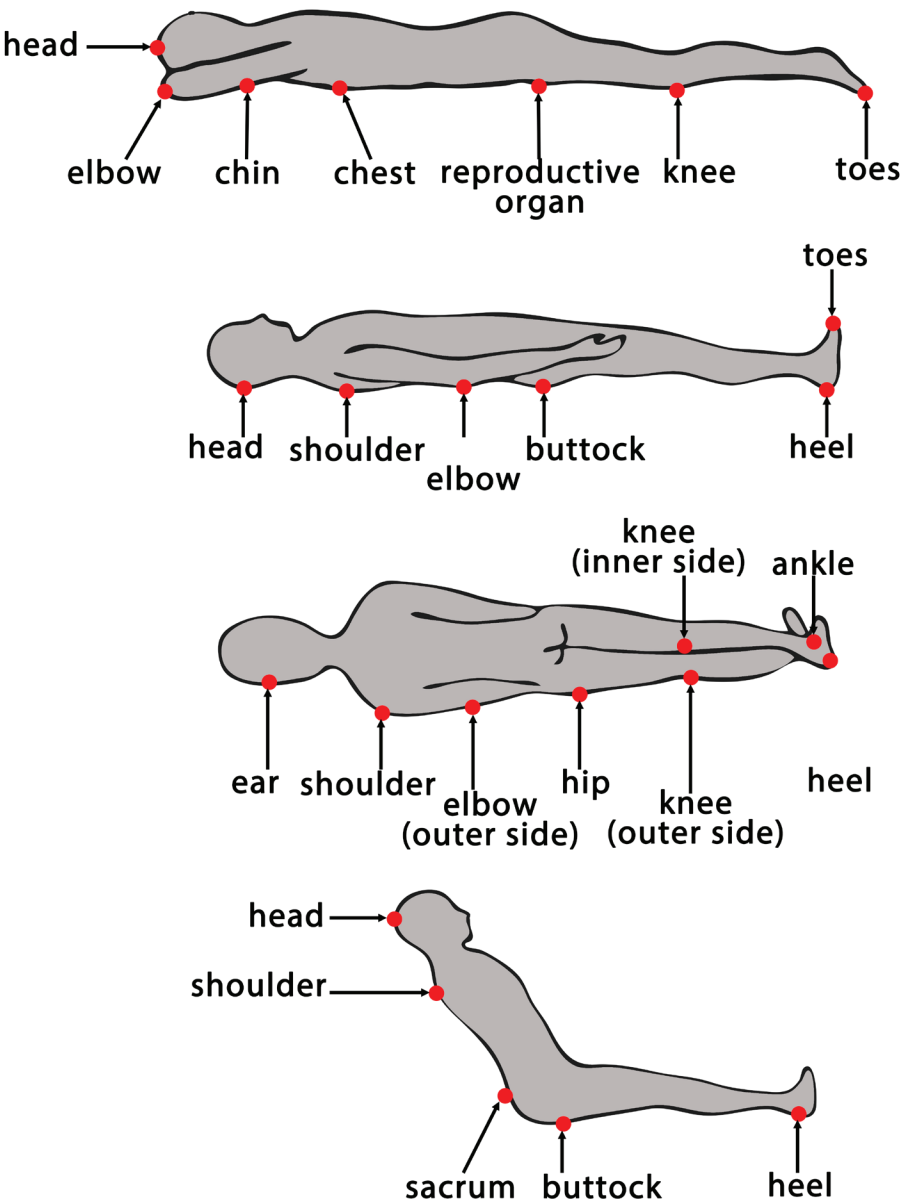
If you have any damage to your skin please let your healthcare team know as soon as possible.



Where on the body can I develop pressure ulcers?

Pressure ulcers usually happen on bony parts of the body, such as the bottom, heels, hips and elbows, but they can happen anywhere.

Common locations of pressure ulcers



Am I at risk of pressure ulcers and what can be done if I am?

You will be more at risk if you:

- Sit or lie in the same position for too long
- Have poor circulation or swelling
- Have lost weight
- Have reduced sensation in any part of the body
- Have other medical conditions such as diabetes
- Are prescribed certain medications such as chemotherapy or steroids
- Are having surgery or radiotherapy
- Have a poor diet and do not drink enough fluids
- Have wet skin from incontinence, sweat or other moisture
- Are using medical equipment such as a splint, oxygen mask or tubing

What can I do to prevent myself developing a pressure ulcer?

- Ask a healthcare professional if you think you may be at risk
- Surface - Do you have the best surface (mattress/cushion) for your skin? Alert your health care professional if you see or feel something different on your skin
- Skin inspection- Check your skin regularly- look for the early signs of pressure ulcers such as any changes in colour (red or purple or other discoloured areas) or any blisters and feel parts of the skin for any changes in texture or temperature
- Keep moving - Change your position regularly so you are not sitting or lying on the same area of skin for too long
- Incontinence or other moisture-Keep your skin clean and dry
- Nutrition and hydration – Monitor your diet and aim to choose meals with high calories and extra protein. Ensure you have enough fluids each day

What can my health care team do to help prevent me developing a pressure ulcer?

Ward Nurse

- Assess your risk for pressure ulcers every day and advise you on a care plan for prevention
- Help you protect your skin and to reposition regularly if you are unable to do this yourself
- Advise you if a special mattress/cushion could help your skin circulation or aid comfort
- Weigh you regularly to ensure you are not losing weight
- Encourage you to drink an adequate amount
- Refer you to the below specialists if needed

Physiotherapist and Occupational Therapist

- Provide you with an exercise plan to keep you as independent and mobile as possible by improving/ maintaining muscle tone
- Advise you on positioning, seating and specialist equipment

Dietitian and Specialist Nutrition Nurse

- Monitor your nutritional intake
- Give advice on the best menu choices to maintain your skin's health and strength
- Prescribe you extra supplements or special feeding regimes to enhance your calorie and protein intake

Tissue Viability Nurse or Wound Specialist

- Assess any wounds you may have
- Provide you with a comprehensive care plan to aid healing

Your healthcare team will help you check your skin regularly, especially areas you cannot see

If you are at home and have a pressure ulcer please see your GP or contact NHS 111

Further information

The NHS website:

www.nhs.uk/conditions/pressure-sores/

**Adapted with kind permission from Royal Marsden Hospital NHS
Foundation Trust**

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