

## Patient information

# Preventing Pressure Ulcers - A guide for residents, patients, carers and staff

## Preventing Pressure Ulcers

This information may help you to understand the care delivered, to prevent pressure ulcer development during your hospital stay

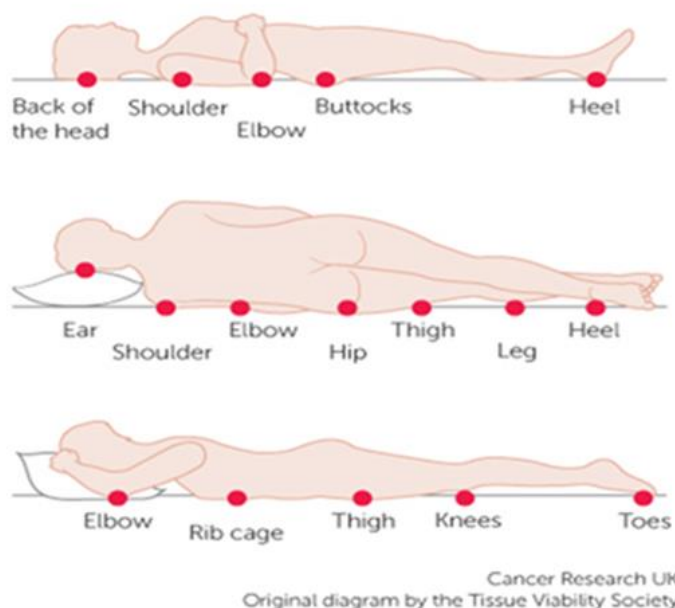
Pressure ulcer prevention is planned on an individual basis. Staff are here to help so please do not hesitate to voice your queries, concerns or questions.

People at risk of developing pressure ulcers would be those:

- With problems moving independently
- Having to stay in bed or in a wheelchair for prolonged periods
- Having reduced sensation or discomfort
- Spending long periods in an armchair
- Who are physically frail
- Having poor circulation
- Having moist skin
- Having had a previous pressure ulcer
- Having a poor diet and not drinking enough fluids
- Having lost feeling
- Suffering from a severe infection.

## What is a pressure ulcer? Also known as a 'bed sore' or 'pressure sore'

A pressure ulcer is damage to the skin and underlying tissue usually over a bony area of the body. 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.



## Who is at risk of developing pressure ulcers?

- Problems with moving independently
- Having to stay in bed or are in a wheelchair
- Reduced sensation or discomfort
- Spending long periods in an armchair
- Are physically frail
- Poor circulation - caused by vascular disease or if you are a heavy smoker
- Moist skin caused by incontinence, sweating or a weeping wound
- Had a previous pressure ulcer
- Poor diet and don't drink enough fluids
- Have lost feeling in parts of their body e.g after a stroke, spinal injury
- A severe infection

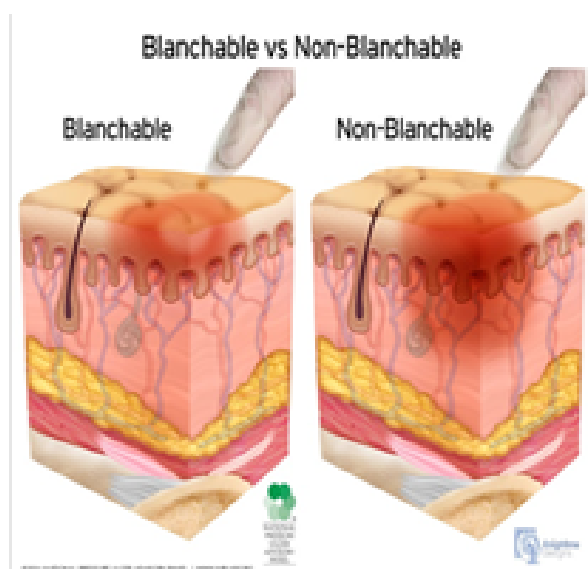
## Assessing your risk

Care from the nursing/care staff will be planned with you (and your carer if appropriate) and time to discuss the care to prevent the development of pressure damage.

**Skin Inspection** - your skin will be inspected regularly and documented.

**Position** - you will be encouraged to change your position at frequent intervals, advised on correct seating positions supporting your feet and posture. Frequency will be determined by your individual risk assessment. Nursing staff will assist you in positional changes and ensure you are comfortable. Risk assessment and comfort may result in specialised equipment being used to further prevent pressure ulcers developing. This may be a different mattress, heel elevation device or limited time sitting.

## What does a pressure ulcer look like?



Signs to look for:

- Red patches on light-skinned people (that do not disappear when light pressed)
- Purplish/bluish patches on dark-skinned people
- Swelling
- Blisters, shiny areas, dry patches

Signs to feel for

- Hard areas, warm areas, swollen skin over bony areas

## How to avoid pressure ulcers

- It is important for you to move and change your position as often as you can. If mobile, walk around at least every two hours.
- If you are immobile but sitting in a chair, re-adjust your position by tilting from side to side in the chair, make sure both feet are flat on the floor, ensuring you are unable to slide forward.
- If a person is in bed change their position regularly, alternating between back and sides using a pillow to tilt their hips and shoulders also to raise heel off the mattress.
- Use glide sheet when moving to help prevent shearing damage.
- Inspect the skin regularly for signs of 'redness' or damage over the bony areas.
- Keep skin clean and dry at all times and if you have continence problems, use mild soap to wash skin and use a suitable moisturiser for dry skin.
- Moisturiser should be used frequently on vulnerable areas of the body i.e. where there is a likelihood of pressure sores forming.

Please consult the nurse if you currently use any creams, emollients or continence products.

## Important information

This patient information is for guidance purposes only and is not provided to replace professional clinical advice from a qualified practitioner.

## Your comments

We are always interested to hear your views about our leaflets. If you have any comments, please contact the Patient Experience Team – Tel: (01323) 417400 Ext: 5860 or by email at: [esh-tr.patientexperience@nhs.net](mailto:esh-tr.patientexperience@nhs.net)

## Hand hygiene

The trust is committed to maintaining a clean, safe environment. Hand hygiene is very important in controlling infection. Alcohol gel is widely available at the patient bedside for staff use and at the entrance of each clinical area for visitors to clean their hands before and after entering.

## Other formats

**If you require any of the Trust leaflets in alternative formats, such as large print or alternative languages, please contact the Equality and Human Rights Department.**

Tel: (01424) 755255 and ask for the Equality and Human Right lead

## Reference

Produced by the Tissue Viability Team and East Sussex Healthcare Trust Pressure Ulcer Steering Group - Tissue viability team can be accessed via:  
Email: [esht.acutetissueviability@nhs.net](mailto:esht.acutetissueviability@nhs.net) or Email: [esh-tr.communitytissueviability@nhs.net](mailto:esh-tr.communitytissueviability@nhs.net)

Next review date: June 2022

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