



PREVENTING PRESSURE INJURIES



Pressure injuries can have a dangerous effect on your health and quality of life. This booklet will give you information about pressure injuries:

- what they are
- how to recognize early warning signs
- how to prevent them

**WE WILL HELP YOU TO
PROTECT YOUR SKIN**

MOST PRESSURE INJURIES CAN BE PREVENTED

WORK WITH YOUR HEALTH CARE TEAM TO LOWER YOUR RISK OF GETTING A PRESSURE INJURY



The information in this booklet is general and is not a medical recommendation for your personal situation. If you have already been given information by your health care team, follow those specific instructions.

Talk to your health care team about your care. As you read this information:

- ask questions
- explain your needs, wants and concerns
- make sure you understand what is being done and why

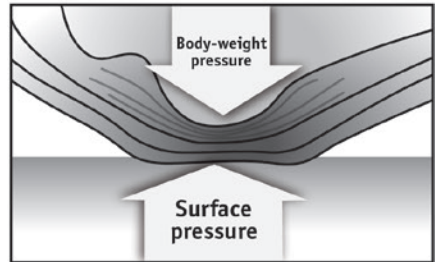
WHAT IS A PRESSURE INJURY?

SKIN DAMAGE CAUSED BY PRESSURE

It is also known as a pressure ulcer, a pressure sore or bed sore.

Skin needs blood to stay healthy. Blood brings nutrients to the skin and carries waste away.

A blood vessel is like a garden hose that brings water to the grass. When you step on a hose or it gets kinked, the water can't get through and the grass dies.



When pressure closes off blood vessels, blood can't get through to your skin and the cells become damaged and a pressure injury develops.

A pressure injury can begin as a red spot that doesn't go away. That area can become a small sore and then a large wound. In serious cases, the wound goes deep into the body, damaging muscle, fat and sometimes bone. The deeper the injury, the harder it is to heal.

WHY YOU NEED TO KNOW

PRESSURE INJURIES CAN DEVELOP QUICKLY

Pressure injuries:



- slow your recovery from illness or injury
- lead to a longer hospital stay
- can be painful
- limit activities or require bed rest
- lower quality of life
- become a serious problem if infected
- may require surgery

Pressure injuries are most likely to develop on skin that covers bony areas, but they can happen anywhere skin is under pressure.

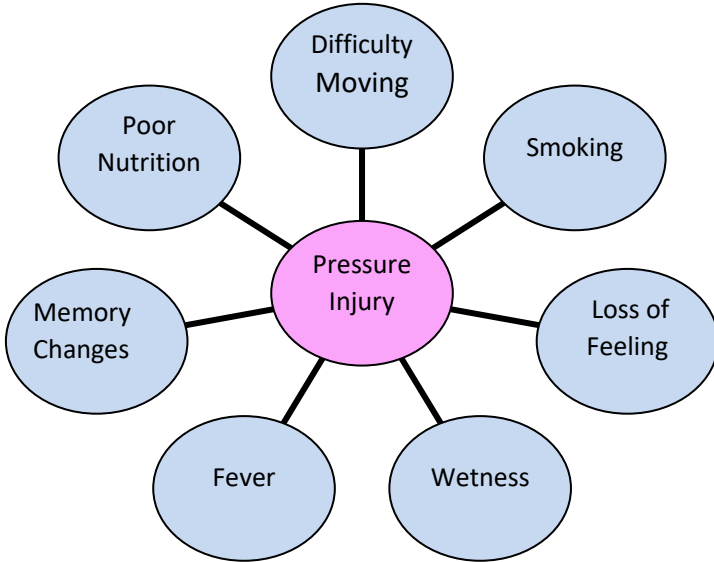
DID YOU KNOW?

There are other causes that can lead to a pressure injury such as friction from rubbing and dragging the skin against a surface, or shear from sliding down in a bed or a chair.

IT'S MORE THAN JUST PRESSURE

KNOW YOUR RISKS

You are more likely to develop a pressure injury if you have one or more of the following risks.



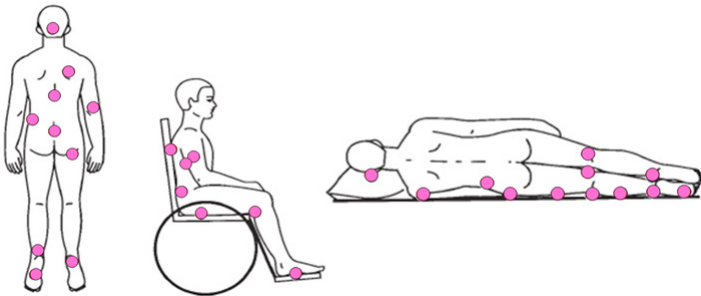
TALK TO YOUR HEALTH CARE TEAM TO LEARN MORE ABOUT EACH OF YOUR RISKS AND WHAT YOU CAN DO TO LOWER YOUR RISK OF GETTING A PRESSURE INJURY.

CHECK YOUR SKIN EVERY DAY

LOOK FOR CHANGES

A skin check means looking over your whole body.

Pressure injuries often develop on buttocks, hips, heels, elbows and shoulders. The dots below show other areas where pressure injuries can develop.



- Checking your skin every day helps you see the warning signs that a pressure injury may be starting to develop.
- Use a hand mirror or ask for help to check the areas that are hard to see.
- If you don't have sensation (feeling) in an area, check it more often.

WATCH FOR EARLY WARNING SIGNS

YOU MAY BE THE FIRST TO KNOW - TELL SOMEBODY AS SOON AS POSSIBLE

The sooner you take notice of the problem and treat the cause, the more likely the pressure injury will be less severe.

Early Warning Signs	
Look for	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Changes in skin colour such as red, purple or blue/black skin• Rashes, dryness or swelling• Shiny skin• Blisters, cracks, scabs• Open area, may have fluids weeping from it
Feel for	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Warm and/or itchy areas• Skin that is harder or softer than normal• Swelling over boney areas• Tender or painful areas

If you find a suspicious area on your skin, stay off of it (change your position). If the redness is still there after 30 minutes, try not to sit or lie on the area for 24 hours.

IF YOU NOTICE ANY OF THESE WARNING SIGNS

TELL YOUR HEALTH CARE PROVIDER, RIGHT AWAY.

TAKE CARE OF YOUR SKIN

HAVE THE RIGHT AMOUNT OF MOISTURE

Skin that is too wet or too dry is fragile; fragile skin is more at risk for a pressure injury

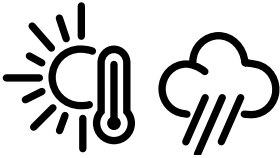
- Keep your skin clean.
- Wash with warm (not hot) water using a mild, unscented soap.
- Dry your skin gently; do not massage skin over bony areas.
- Pay close attention to areas that may be wet such as between your legs and skin folds.



- Apply moisturizer to dry skin. Use moisturizers that are fragrance and alcohol free.

AVOID SKIN DAMAGE

LIMIT HARMFUL CONTACT



If you have problems controlling your bowels or bladder, clean your skin as soon as it is soiled and apply a protective cream.

Wear clothing and shoes that fit.

Avoid sitting on thick seams, rivets or bulky pockets. Do not carry a comb, wallet, etc. in your back pockets.

Check for folds and wrinkles in your clothes and bed sheets. Smooth out areas that have wrinkled or bunched-up so they do not cause pressure on your skin.

Protect your skin from dry or cold air.

EAT A BALANCED DIET

HAVE PROTEIN AT EVERY MEAL AND SNACK

If a health care professional has already recommended a special diet/fluid restriction, follow your personalized plan.

Eat a well-balanced diet from the 4 food groups:



- Fruits and vegetables
- Grain products
- Milk and alternatives
- Meat and alternatives

Ask a Registered Dietitian for advice to be sure you are getting what your body needs; you may need to increase protein and other nutrients to help prevent pressure injuries.

Good protein sources include: milk, cheese, yogurt, pudding, custard, eggs, meat, fish, and poultry. If you are vegetarian or vegan, you may need to speak to a Registered Dietitian to make the best choices for your situation.

Take a daily multivitamin and mineral supplement. Consult with your pharmacist or other health care professional if you have questions.



DRINK ENOUGH FLUIDS

Drink at least 8 cups of fluid every day, unless advised differently. This may include water, milk, juice, or nutritional supplement beverages. Consult your health care professional for advice about how much water/fluids to drink.



HealthLinkBC has Registered Dietitians who are also available to answer your healthy eating questions. You can reach a Dietitian by:

- by phone at **8-1-1** (toll-free in BC)
- by email **www.healthlinkbc.ca**

**EATING HEALTHY FOOD AND DRINKING
ENOUGH FLUID GIVES YOUR SKIN THE FUEL
IT NEEDS TO PROTECT AND REPAIR ITSELF.**

KEEP MOVING

CHANGE YOUR POSITION AT LEAST EVERY 2 HOURS

Moving relieves pressure and allows blood to flow properly through your blood vessels to your skin cells. If you can't move yourself then ask someone to help or do it for you.

Throughout the day, move as often as you can. It is better to move a little bit, and more often, than to do just one big move.

- Shift your weight frequently, sit up, stand up, or walk.
- Get out of bed, if possible for all meals.
- Avoid scraping or dragging your skin when moving into bed or into your wheelchair.
- Ask your health care team for tips on how to move safely.

KEEP MOVING

CHANGE YOUR POSITION WHEN SITTING IN A CHAIR

Make a big position change every hour. Stand up if you can do that safely. If you cannot change position by yourself, ask somebody to help.

Make a small position change every 15 minutes. You can reduce pressure by making a small shift such as leaning forward or leaning to the side and holding this position for 30 seconds.



Ask your physiotherapist or occupational therapist to show you the best way to shift your weight.

KEEP MOVING

CHANGE YOUR POSITION WHEN LYING IN A BED

Make big position changes (like turning from one side to the other) often, at least every 2 hours.

If you cannot change position by yourself, ask somebody to help.

WHAT CAN I DO IF IT IS DIFFICULT TO MOVE?

EXERCISE TO INCREASE BLOOD FLOW

You can exercise even if you cannot get out of a chair or bed.

The following exercises can be done when you are up in the chair or in bed; When doing the exercises in bed, ensure that there is a pillow under your lower legs so your heels do not touch the mattress

When possible, do these exercises every hour. If you cannot do the exercises by yourself, then ask somebody to help or do them for you.

- If able, squeeze the cheeks of your buttocks together (you must do this exercise on your own!)
 - ◇ Hold each squeeze for 5 seconds
 - ◇ Don't hold your breath while squeezing
 - ◇ Repeat 5-10 times
- When up in the chair, lift your feet off the floor/ wheelchair pedal or, if in bed, 'push' your knee down into the bed
 - ◇ Hold each lift or push for 5 seconds
 - ◇ Don't hold your breath while lifting or pushing
 - ◇ Repeat 5-10 times
- Turn your ankles in circles, both clock-wise and counter-clock wise
 - ◇ Repeat 5-10 times
- Pull your toes up toward your face, then point your toes down toward the foot of the bed or floor
 - ◇ Repeat 5-10 times

WHAT CAN I DO IF IT IS PAINFUL TO MOVE?

TELL YOUR DOCTOR AND/OR HEALTH CARE TEAM IF PAIN LIMITS YOUR ABILITY TO MOVE



Take pain medication as often as your Physician /Nurse Practitioner (NP) recommends. It is sometimes recommended to take your pain medication before you move or walk.

If you have unpleasant side effects from your pain medications, discuss this with your Physician/NP to see if there is a different medication you can use.

Ask your health care provider to help you to manage your pain. There may be other pain management options such as using deep breathing, relaxation and visualization techniques or transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation (TENS), speak with your Physiotherapist.

CHECK YOUR POSTURE

WHILE YOU ARE SITTING IN A CHAIR/WHEELCHAIR

Avoid slouching when you sit:

- Keep your head over your pelvis
- Have your buttocks touching the back of the chair

Support your feet so that your knees are level with your hips.

If you have difficulty moving and repositioning yourself, ask somebody to help you get back into the right position.

When you are sitting in your chair/wheelchair, it may be necessary that you use a specialized seat, back support/cushion and/or specialize tilt feature to take pressure off your buttocks (sitting bones) and/or your back.

**GOOD POSTURE IS ALWAYS IMPORTANT AND WILL
HELP TO PROTECT YOUR SKIN!**

CHECK YOUR POSTURE

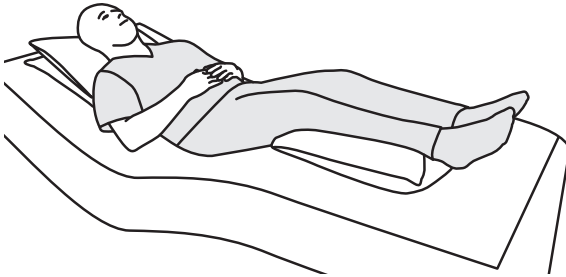
WHILE YOU ARE LYING IN BED

If you are use a hospital-style bed, having the head of the bed raised high can cause:

- pressure on your tailbone/buttocks area
- sliding down in bed which causes shearing of the skin

In order to prevent skin damage:

- Keep the head-of-bed below 30° unless you are eating in bed
- Raise the foot of your bed before you raise the head to prevent sliding down



CHECK YOUR POSTURE

WHILE YOU ARE LYING IN BED CONT'D

When lying on your back, place a pillow under your lower legs, from below the knees to ankles, so that your heels do not touch the mattress.



When you lie on your side, position your hips and shoulders so they are tilted 30 degrees. Place a pillow between your knees and your ankles so that the bony parts of those joints don't touch each other.

GOOD POSTURE IS ALWAYS IMPORTANT AND WILL

HELP TO PROTECT YOUR SKIN!

CHECK YOUR SURFACE

THE CORRECT EQUIPMENT WILL HELP TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

You may need to use specialized equipment designed to protect your skin. Some examples are specialized wheelchair seat cushions or back supports, mattresses, or body-positioning equipment.

Having the correct equipment and using it, as shown by your OT/PT/Nurse, will help to reduce pressure.

Check your equipment daily, as taught by the OT/PT/Nurse, to ensure that it is good working order.

What can I do to help prevent pressure injuries?



Skin check - Look for redness, bruises, blisters or open areas each day.

Keep moving - move or change position at least every 2 hours. Ask for help if you need it.

Ideal moisture balance - keep skin clean; any wetness against the skin can make it fragile. Moisturize dry skin.

Nutrition and hydration - eat a well-balanced diet and drink enough fluids.

Surface – use your cushion or mattress and check it daily to ensure that it is in good working order

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The information in this document is intended solely for the person to whom it was given by the health care team.

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