

Pressure Injury Prevention

Information for Patients & Families

A pressure injury, also referred to as a pressure ulcer or bed sore, is an injury to the skin caused by unrelieved pressure and may occur when you are unable to move due to illness, injury, or surgery. Pressure injuries can happen quickly, from lying or sitting in the same position for too long. They can be painful, take a long time to heal, and may lead to other complications. Pressure injuries may develop under plasters, splints or braces, and around medical equipment such as tubes, masks or drains.

People at increased risk

You have an increased risk of developing a pressure injury if you are:

- Elderly or very young
- Immobile or having an operation
- Underweight, eating poorly or have experienced recent weight loss
- Overweight
- Incontinent

Signs of a pressure injury

Check your skin and look for the warning signs:

- Redness/skin discoloration
- Tenderness, pain, or itching in affected areas
- Blistering
- Broken Skin

Reducing the risk of pressure injury

Patients, family, care givers and staff can all help to reduce the risk of a pressure injury.

- Staff will assess your level of risk of developing a pressure injury.
- If you are able to move yourself, involve your carers by asking them to remind you to change your position regularly. If you are unable to move yourself, staff will help you change your position frequently.
- Let staff know if your clothes or bedding are damp. Ask for help if you have a weak bladder or bowel.
- Let staff know if you are experiencing any warning signs (check over page).
- Drink fluids regularly, unless you are on a fluid restriction. You may be offered nutritional supplements if you are underweight, have recently lost weight, or have been eating poorly.
- Keep your skin clean and dry, use a 'skin-friendly' cleanser and moisturiser if appropriate.
- Be aware of the risk of a pressure injury under plasters, splints or braces, and around tubes, masks or drains.
- Specialised pressure-relieving equipment such as cushions and mattresses are available in hospital.

Managing a pressure injury

If you get a pressure injury:

- Staff will discuss how best to manage your pressure injury with you and your care giver. This may be called a 'care plan'.
- Use the prescribed equipment recommended at all times.
- Move frequently (where possible) to relieve pressure.

Heading home

When you go home from hospital with a pressure injury:

- Continue the care plan at home.
- Staff will organise ongoing care, which may include your GP or community nurse.
- Staff will advise you on how to obtain specialised equipment.

About the Pressure Injury Prevention Project

The Pressure Injury Prevention Project is a program run by the Clinical Excellence Commission. It promotes best practice for the prevention and management of pressure injuries in New South Wales health facilities.

For further information on the Pressure Injury Prevention Project, please visit <http://www.cec.health.nsw.gov.au/programs/pressureinjury-prevention-project>

Acknowledgements

Australian Wound Management Association.

Pan Pacific Clinical Practice Guideline for the Prevention and Management of Pressure Injury.

Cambridge Media, Osborne Park, WA.

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