

# Pressure Injury Prevention: Help Us Protect Your Skin

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## What is a pressure injury?

A pressure injury, also known as a “bedsore”, is injury to the skin caused by too much pressure. It can happen if you lie or sit in one position too long.

Pressure injuries often occur over bony areas like the tailbone, heels, elbows, hips, or back of the head, but can occur anywhere that there is continued pressure.

## Why is a pressure injury a problem?

A pressure injury is a problem because it can cause damage to your skin. It may look minor, such as redness or change in skin color. But it can hide more damage under the skin surface. A pressure injury can begin quickly and cause pain, develop into an open wound, become infected, or delay your recovery.

## Who is at risk for getting a pressure injury?

Anyone can develop a pressure injury, but certain factors may increase your risk:

- general poor health
- vascular (blood vessel) disease, smoking, diabetes
- limited ability to move by yourself
- poor nutrition and hydration (not drinking enough liquid)
- lack of ability to feel certain areas of your body (examples: diabetes, spinal cord injury)

- lack of control over your bowels and bladder
- too much moisture or dryness of the skin
- having had a pressure injury in the past

## What should I look for?

- red, purple, or blistered areas (usually over a bony area)
- pain or tenderness

Your nurse should inspect your skin at least twice a day. Let them know if you notice any warning signs of a pressure injury or if you have questions or concerns.

## What can I do to prevent a pressure injury?

We encourage patients, families, and caregivers to be involved in the prevention and management of pressure injuries. Here are some things you can do:

### Limit pressure

- Move, move, move as often as you can. Even small changes in your position help.
- If you are in bed, your nurse will have you change position every 2 hours. If you are unable to move yourself, the staff will help you.
- If you cannot reposition yourself and we do not come to assist you or your family member within two hours, please feel free to remind us.

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- If you are in a chair, change positions every 15 minutes.
- Avoid donut-shaped cushions as they can cause more pressure. Ask your nurse to bring you an air cushion for the chair.
- It is important to keep your heels off the bed. This can be done with pillows, or your nurse can bring you foam boots.

### **Reduce friction**

- When repositioning yourself, gently lift instead of pulling or dragging yourself.
- Try to keep the head of your bed as low as possible, unless other medical conditions do not permit it.
- Good posture is important while you are sitting in a chair.
- Your nurse may put a soft foam dressing on your heels and bottom to help relieve pressure and friction.

### **Eat healthy**

- Eat a healthy, well-balanced diet that includes good sources of protein like fish, eggs, or meat.
- Drink plenty of fluids.
- Take nutritional supplements as advised by your health care provider or nutritionist.

### **Take Care of Your Skin**

- Allow your nurse/caregiver to inspect your skin.
- Clean your skin right away if you have a bowel movement or leak urine. Moisture barrier ointments and absorbent underpads can be used to help protect your skin from moisture.
- Do not rub or massage over red, purple, or tender parts of your body.
- If you have a pressure injury, avoid lying on that area.

At VUMC, our goal is to keep you safe. We encourage you and your family to be involved in the prevention and care of pressure injuries. Together we can reduce your risk of getting a pressure injury.