

## Pressure ulcers (pressure sores)

How to reduce the risk of acquiring pressure sores in home environment

### Other formats

If you need this information in another format such as audio tape or computer disk, Braille, large print, high contrast, British Sign Language or translated into another language, please telephone the PALS desk on 01271 314090.

**Please be aware this leaflet contains images of pressure sores, which some people may find upsetting.**

### What is a pressure sore?

This leaflet has been designed to help you understand the risks associated with developing a pressure sore in your home environment and the measures you can take to reduce the likelihood of developing one.

*"A pressure sore is localised injury to the skin which may include the underlying tissue, usually over a bony prominence, as a result of direct pressure or shearing of the skin."*  
(European Pressure Ulcer Advisory Panel)

- Direct pressure – pressure ulcers are caused when an area of skin and the tissues below are damaged as a result of being placed under pressure sufficient to impair its blood supply, for example, by sitting or lying in one position for a long period time without moving.
- Shearing – this may occur if you slide down, or are dragged up the bed or chair and the layers of skin are forced to slide over one another or over deeper tissues.

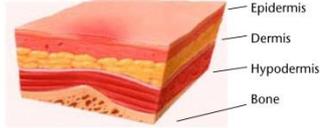
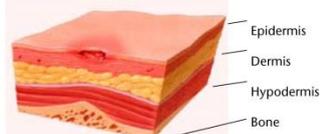
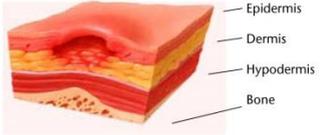
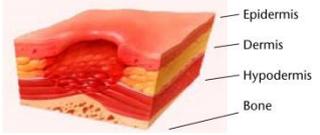
You may think that you are not at risk of developing a pressure sore because of your age, general fitness and activity levels, but when you are unwell or recovering from an operation these factors change, increasing your risk.

## Grading of sores:

We typically grade sores from a grade 1 to a grade 4 depending on severity and presentation, and we will discuss this with you if we discover you have a sore whilst we are caring for you.

Scottish Adapted European Pressure Ulcer Advisory Panel (EPUAP) Grading Tool




	<b>Progression of a pressure ulcer</b>		
<p><b>Grade 1</b> Non-blanchable erythema (redness) of intact skin. Discolouration of the skin, warmth, oedema, induration or hardness may also be used as indicators, particularly on individuals with darker skin</p>			
<p><b>Grade 2</b> Partial thickness skin loss involving epidermis, dermis, or both. The ulcer is superficial and presents clinically as an abrasion or blister</p>			
<p><b>Grade 3</b> Full thickness skin loss involving damage to or necrosis of subcutaneous tissue that may extend down to, but not through underlying fascia</p>			
<p><b>Grade 4</b> Extensive destruction, tissue necrosis, or damage to muscle, bone, or supporting structures with or without full thickness skin loss</p>			

[www.tissueviabilityonline.com/pu](http://www.tissueviabilityonline.com/pu)

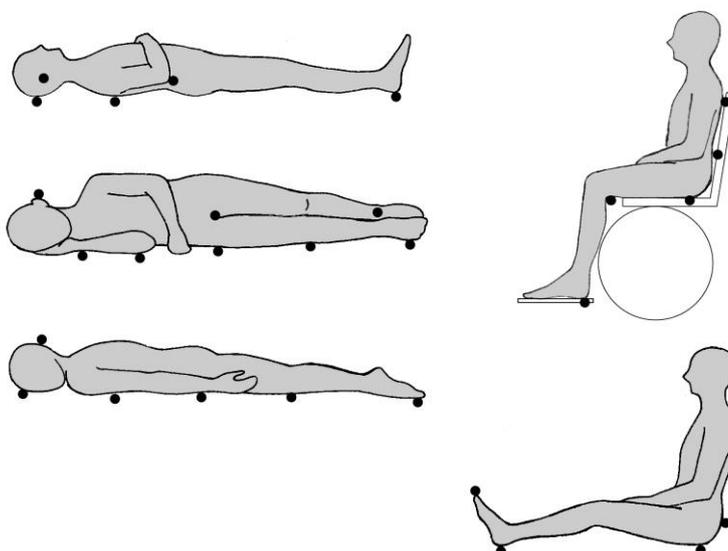
Version 1 1st July 2009

Images: Colin Blain Medical Photographer Inverclyde Royal Hospital (IRH) Greenock / Science Photo Library

## Where can pressure sores develop?

Common sites for developing pressure sores are:

- Heels
- Sacrum
- Elbows
- Hips
- Scalp
- Ankles



## How can I reduce the risk of developing a sore?

1. Keep moving/change positioning. If you have difficulties doing this on your own, you may receive help and support from a relative or carer to assist you with this. Your nursing and/or therapy team may be able to advise you how you can reposition yourself independently.
2. If you spend time in a semi reclined position in bed, make sure you support your knees or use the knee break on your bed if you have one, to relieve the pressure on your lower back, sacrum and heels.
3. If you are sitting in a chair, make sure you are well supported with your feet flat on the floor and your back fully supported by the backrest. Your hips and knees should be at a 90 degree bend. There should be a small gap between the back of your knee and the front edge of the seat to prevent pressure building up behind your knees. Your arms should be able to rest comfortably on the armrests. This position will help to avoid pressure building up around your lower back and bottom and will help you to reposition yourself. The nursing or therapy staff can advise you about positioning in a chair.
4. Ensure you are eating and drinking well.
5. Ensure your skin is kept free from moisture.
6. You may be given special equipment if required.

## What can you expect from us?

When you are admitted to the health and social care team, a healthcare professional will carry out a full assessment of your skin integrity and will ask you if you have any sore bits of skin or any existing sores. These will then be examined and acted on accordingly.

If you do have a pressure sore, with your consent you may be asked if we can photograph it. If you should develop a pressure sore, the health care professional caring for you will have to record this, and again with your consent you may be asked if we can take a photograph of the sore. The reason for the photograph is so that we can see if the sore is improving or deteriorating and act accordingly. We may also share the photos with our tissue viability specialist nurses for further advice about your care.

In the event of a sore occurring, the health care professional caring for you will discuss this fully with you.

You will be asked every time you are seen if we can check your skin to enable us to identify promptly any possible problems. Assessing your skin when we first meet you and at regular intervals thereafter is an important task for nursing staff to do, so please don't be offended if we ask you personal questions about your skin; we ask everyone. Please do tell us if you have areas of sore or numb skin.

## How are pressure sores treated?

If you have an existing pressure sore, or develop a new one, a care plan will be developed with you. We will identify an appropriate dressing for the sore if one is needed. We will also develop a plan with you to ensure that you regularly re-position yourself, or are assisted to do so in order to minimise the risk of further pressure sores developing, and to help to heal any existing ones. This plan will be discussed with you fully.

If you have a pressure sore, the health care professional caring for you will discuss this fully with you.

## Possible consequences of developing a pressure sore

If you develop a pressure sore, the consequences may be as follows:

- Increased pain
- The possibility of infection
- Reduced physical activity
- Lengthened hospital stay if you need to go into hospital
- The need for additional nursing and care input at home
- A hospital bed at home

## Follow up

You may need continued support at home from a community nurse or therapist (physiotherapist or occupational therapist). We will provide support and advice about how you can keep moving, how you can eat and drink healthily and how you can reduce the risk of developing new pressure sores. If you need any pressure relieving equipment (e.g. bed, mattress, cushion etc.) then you will be advised of this and we will explain how this may be provided for you at home.

## Further information

[nhs.stopthepressure.co.uk](https://nhs.stopthepressure.co.uk)

[www.your-turn.org.uk](https://www.your-turn.org.uk)

[www.epuap.org](https://www.epuap.org)

## References

Dealey C, Posnett J, walker A. (2012) The cost of pressure ulcers in the United Kingdom. Journal of Wound Care. 21 (6) 261-266

Moore Z, Cowman S, Conroy RM. (2011) A randomized controlled clinical trial of repositioning using the 360 tilt for the prevention of pressure ulcers. Journal of Clinical Nursing Sep 20 (17-18) 2633-2644

[www.nice.org.uk/guidance/cg179](http://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/cg179)

[www.healthcareimprovementscotland.org/programmes/patient\\_safety/tissue\\_viability\\_resources/pressure\\_ulcer\\_grading\\_tool.aspx](http://www.healthcareimprovementscotland.org/programmes/patient_safety/tissue_viability_resources/pressure_ulcer_grading_tool.aspx)

### **PALS**

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) ensures that the NHS listens to patients, relatives, carers and friends, answers questions and resolves concerns as quickly as possible. If you have a query or concern call 01271 314090 or e-mail [ndht.pals@nhs.net](mailto:ndht.pals@nhs.net). You can also visit the PALS and Information Centre in person at North Devon District Hospital, Barnstaple. Alternatively, it may be possible for us to arrange an appointment in your area.

## Have your say

Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust aims to provide high quality services. However, please tell us when something could be improved. If you have a comment or compliment about a service or treatment, please raise your comments with a member of the ward staff or the PALS team in the first instance.

'Patient Opinion' comments forms are on all wards or online at [www.patientopinion.org.uk](http://www.patientopinion.org.uk).

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