

Are you at risk?

Your guide to preventing
pressure sores

a personal risk assessment



for you, for life

Personal details

Name.....

Address.....
.....
.....
.....

DOB.....

Tel.....

Mobile tel.....

GP.....

Tel.....

Medical history.....

Medication.....

Main carer or contact person.....

Other useful numbers.....
.....

eg. District Nurse, Social Worker, Practice Nurse,
Therapist, Dietitian, Community Psychiatric Nurse

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What is a pressure sore?

A pressure sore (may also be known as a pressure ulcer) is an area of damaged skin and flesh. It is usually caused by sitting or lying in one position for too long without moving.

Pressure damage can occur before a sore is visible on the skin.

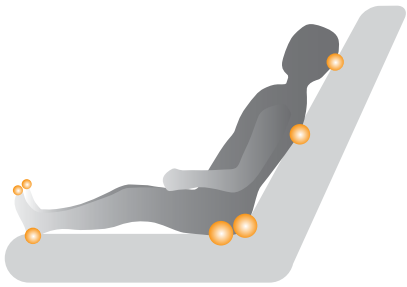
A pressure sore can develop in only a few hours. It usually starts with the skin changing colour - it may appear slightly redder or darker than usual. If a sore isn't treated quickly, it can develop in a few days into an open blister and - over a longer period - into a deep hole in the flesh.

Sores are more likely to develop on the parts of the body which take your weight and where the bone is close to the surface. The areas most at risk are the heels, bottom, base of spine, elbow and shoulders.

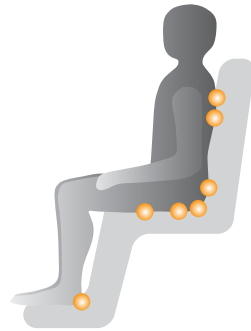
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Sites

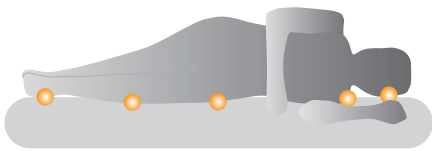
Note the diagrams for the **'hot spots'** which show you the areas you should check regularly. Orange spots show the areas where pressure sores can occur.



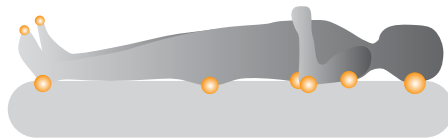
Sitting up in bed



Sitting in a chair



Side lying



Lying on your back

What are the causes?

Pressure Normal body weight can squash the skin in people at risk and damage blood supply to the area. This can lead to tissue damage.

Shearing Strain forces the skin and upper layers away from deeper layers of tissue. This can happen when you slide down or are dragged up, in a bed or chair.

Friction Poor lifting and moving techniques can remove the top layers of skin. Repeated friction can increase the risk of pressure sores.

The following assessment tools include certain warning signs.

Health care professionals rely on you to report any of the following signs in order that they can help you to relieve pressure and reduce your risk. **REMEMBER** these are personal to you and may not be evident to others unless you inform them of any problems.

Assessment of your risk

Problems with movement

Your ability to move may be limited or you may be unable to move. This may be due to a variety of causes, for example:

- a spinal cord injury
- old age
- very young age
- a long-term illness such as osteo-arthritis
- a sudden event, illness or condition such as being unconscious or during an operation

Does this apply to you? YES NO

Unfamiliar environment

If you are away from your usual care setting eg. on holiday, on a long journey, in respite care or hospital you may not be able to carry out routine activities, movements or positioning which normally minimise your risk.

Does this apply to you? YES NO

Problems with sensitivity to pain or discomfort

Some conditions (for example diabetes, stroke) and some treatments (eg. painkillers or epidural pain relief) may reduce your sensitivity to pain or discomfort so that you are not aware of the need to move.

Does this apply to you? YES NO

Poor circulation

Poor circulation caused, for example, by diabetes, vascular disease or heavy smoking, may increase your risk of pressure sores.

Does this apply to you? YES NO

Moist skin

You may be at increased risk if damp skin caused, for example, by incontinence, sweat, or a weeping wound, is not kept clean and dry.

Does this apply to you? YES NO

Inadequate diet or fluid intake

Acceptable weight range:

Women 7st 12lbs – 12st 8lbs (50–80kg)

Men 9st 0lbs – 14st 3lbs (57–90kg)

- 1** Are you outside the acceptable weight ranges or losing weight unintentionally?
- 2** Are you eating less than usual or experiencing any choking or swallowing problems?
- 3** Are you drinking less than 8-10 cups of fluid daily?

If you answer **YES** to either **1** or **2** above, you may need to be referred to a dietitian.

Pressure sores in the past / other scar tissue

Scar tissue from a previous sore or other healed wound is weaker and more prone to further damage.

Does this apply to you? YES NO

Problems with awareness and memory

If you have a problem with your memory it may result in you forgetting to take steps to minimise your risk of developing a sore eg. due to your illness, age, medication, alcohol, etc.

Does this apply to you? YES NO

If you have answered yes to one or more of these boxes then you are at risk. You need to carry out a skin and tissue assessment at least once a day on all your 'hot spots'. The more frequently you check, the more likely you are to identify early damage.

Skin and tissue assessment

What can you see?

(If you cannot see yourself then it is important to ask a carer to look at your skin on your behalf. You can also use a mirror in order to help you examine your skin.)

Do you have red areas which go white when pressed?

YES* NO

*Relieve the pressure on this area immediately and the redness should resolve.

Do you have red areas which stay red when pressed?

YES NO

Do you have redness due to other causes eg. boil, abscess or infection?*

YES NO *If yes, seek advice from your GP

Do you have purple discolouration?

YES NO

Do you have any areas of your skin which are grazed, chaffed, blistered or an open wound?

YES NO

Does the area feel hot?

YES NO

Does the area feel swollen?

YES NO

Does the texture of the tissue feel unusually hard or soft to touch? (These changes can occur without any visible changes to the skin)

YES NO

At this point you might end up with a sore because pressure damage has occurred internally before it is visible on the surface. However it is important to prevent further damage to surrounding tissue.

Do you have any pain or discomfort on any 'hot spot'?

YES NO

If you have answered yes to any of these questions seek advice from a health care professional as soon as possible. All these are visible signs of pressure damage and require prompt advice and assistance to prevent further deterioration. You should endeavour to keep off all the affected areas as much as possible until help is available.

If your skin is naturally darker it may be difficult to detect any redness and you should pay more attention to the other signs of damage listed.

Some advice

- Most people change their position every few minutes throughout the day and night, however if your ability to move is restricted then this may mean that you need to make a conscious effort to reposition yourself. This will not only relieve pressure but will improve your joint movement and muscle tone.
- As with skin inspection, relieving pressure will depend on you as an individual. Changing your position regularly should help to prevent any redness or damage occurring.

Equipment

- There is a huge variety of pressure relieving aids available. These may be useful for prevention and comfort if simple repositioning is not effective or practical.
- If you feel you need equipment then seeking professional advice will help ensure that you obtain products which are appropriate to your needs.

- You should NOT use the following as pressure relieving aids: water filled gloves, synthetic sheepskins, doughnut type devices, rubber rings.

Managing moisture and skin care

- It is important to keep your skin clean and dry. If you suffer from any incontinence, have an open wound or sore that leaks onto your skin it is important to wash and dry your skin frequently. Dry skin should be treated with a moisturiser which you know is suitable for your skin.

Taking care of yourself

- Eat a healthy balanced diet (see attached 'Balance of Good Health' leaflet)
- Drink plenty of fluids
- Reduce your alcohol intake
- If you are a smoker, reduce your cigarette intake: smoking impairs circulation and slows down healing, should you develop a sore. Ask your Practice Nurse or District Nurse for advice.

It is up to you to use this information to help you.

If you are at all worried about your pressure sore risk you must tell somebody.



Useful numbers

District Nurses 0345 605 0206

NHS Direct 0845 46 47

Wound Prevention and Management Service 0113 305 5099

Leeds Community Equipment Service 0113 247 7387

We can make this information available in Braille, large print, audio or other languages on request.

www.leedscommunityhealthcare.nhs.uk

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