

Preventing Pressure Ulcers

What the nurses will do if you are at risk

- Check every two hours (or more often if they are very concerned about pressure ulcers) whether you have pain, need the toilet or changing, want a drink and help you to move
- Use a pressure relieving mattress (air) on the bed or cushion on the chair
- Limit the time you spend sat out in a chair
- Change your position including lying on your sides
- Encourage dietary supplements and drinks if you need them
- Check your pressure areas for ulceration by looking every day, even if you say there is not a problem. They will show you using a mirror if you want to see.
- Use protective boots on your feet if you need them
- Use aids to enable you to change position, for example, slide sheet, hoist if you cannot move yourself
- Use bed cradles to help you move in bed

Treatment

If the skin is broken, a dressing will be put over the ulcer and this will be changed regularly. Serious pressure ulcers may require specialist dressings. The most important treatment is to relieve the pressure by frequent changes in position and protection.

Very ill patients

Sometimes, despite all we do to prevent it, pressure damage can occur. If you are concerned that you or your loved one is becoming distressed by frequent turning, please ask to speak to the nurse in charge.

Our over-riding objective is to ensure that you are treated with respect and dignity and that you are involved in what happens to you.

You still need to be aware of developing pressure ulcers when you leave hospital.

If you or your family have any questions about the information in this leaflet please speak to one of the nurses. Any feedback you would like to share with us is much appreciated.

What is pressure damage?

This leaflet is designed to help you have a better understanding of pressure ulceration and how we aim to prevent it whilst you are in hospital. Musgrove Park Hospital is committed to the prevention of pressure damage. We will investigate any that occur during your stay with us.

You may have heard of pressure ulcers (also known as bed sores or pressure sores). They can occur when the tissue on any part of the body is compressed. This is most common over bony prominences such as your heels and bottom, but can occur to any area that has prolonged pressure.



What is pressure damage?

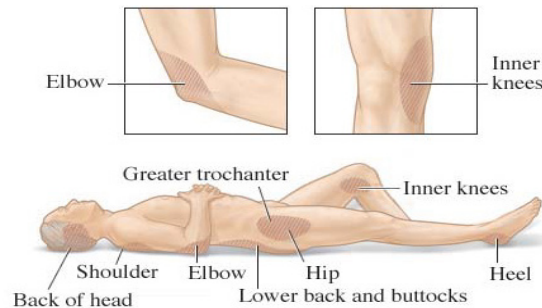
This is when the skin is compressed by prolonged pressure and the tissues underneath are damaged.

Shearing – when the upper skin layers are forced away from deeper layers, for instance by being dragged up a bed and friction can also cause pressure ulcers.

Signs of pressure damage:

- reddening of the skin which does not go away when gently pressed
- purplish / blue patches on dark-skinned people
- swelling
- blisters

- shiny areas
- dry patches
- warm or hard areas
- cracks, wrinkles or calluses



Who gets pressure damage?

Pressure ulcers can prolong your stay in hospital and could become infected.

People in the following groups are particularly vulnerable to pressure ulceration, those who:

- are elderly
- are immobile or who find it difficult to move without help
- find it difficult to eat a range of healthy foods
- find it difficult to drink enough
- are over or under weight
- suffer from poor circulation (peripheral vascular disease)
- are smokers
- suffer from oedema – when fluid collects in the legs
- are suffering from cancer
- suffer from bladder or bowel problems are in pain, who are afraid to move
- have damage to skin from radiotherapy
- have had pressure ulcers before are seriously ill or may be at end of life

The nursing staff will identify whether you are at risk when you are admitted to

hospital. This assessment includes looking at the risks listed above and checking your skin in the most vulnerable areas. They should discuss the findings of their assessment with you so that you can understand what you can do to help protect yourself. Sometimes we find patients have come into hospital with pressure ulcers. All our mattresses have pressure relieving properties.

What can I do to help?

- Please ring your buzzer or ask for help whenever you need it
- Report any discomfort that you feel whilst in any position for some time
- If you can, change your position every hour or so
- Be prepared for the nurses to move you if they are worried about your skin
- Call for help if you need to use the toilet or need pads changing
- Try to eat a well balanced diet with plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables. If you would like snacks between meals, please ask
- Drink plenty of fluids (if you are allowed), whatever you like
- Try to take the supplements you are offered if you do not feel much like eating
- Take regular pain killers if you need them so that it is not painful to move
- Avoid friction or pulling material against your skin (this can cause shearing). Pat your skin dry rather than rubbing
- Try to involve your family or carers in your care