

A Patient & Caregiver Guide Pressure Ulcers



Contributors:

Jackie Birmingham, RN, MSN, CMAC

Lena McCubbin, MS, RN, CWOCN

Christie Sprinkle, BSN, RN, CWOCN

Jean Stow, RN, MSN, CNS, CWOCN

Important Phone Numbers

Doctor:

Hospital Contact:

WOCN: (Wound, Ostomy, Continence Nurse)

EHOB:

Pharmacy:

Other:

Your Skin

The skin is the largest organ of the body and protects us from bacteria, dirt and other foreign objects. It is important that individuals take care of their skin with a well-balanced diet and plenty of fluids and that they avoid tobacco. If the body is healthy, the skin will be healthy.



If a person is elderly or in poor health, inspect the skin daily and record any pinkness or redness that doesn't go away, or redness with a hardened area under it. Also, check over all bony areas that you can feel against the skin, and around skin folds and places where a splint or brace has been worn. Feet should be checked daily as well.

Caregiver

Any skin breakdown can be a serious problem and may require further treatment in addition to the information offered. When skin breakdown is detected or suspected, contact your healthcare advisor immediately.

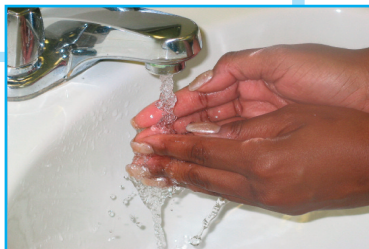
What is a Pressure Ulcer?

Pressure ulcers, sometimes called ‘bed sores’ were thought to happen to those spending most of their time in bed. Today, we know this is **NOT** true. Pressure ulcers can develop when a person stays in **ANY ONE POSITION** for a long period of time. The blood flow to the area slows down or stops, causing the skin to die, which causes the pressure ulcer. Pressure ulcers may even take place in hard-to-see areas such as the inside of the legs, where the knees touch each other in a side-lying position.

A pressure ulcer starts on the inside and works its way out to the surface of the skin. It may take three to seven days for it to appear, but a pressure ulcer may begin forming in a few hours. Any skin breakdown, such as scrapes, blisters, cuts and bruises that do not appear to be healing can be a serious problem and may require medical treatment. Reacting quickly is important.

Caregiver

One way to prevent infection is by hand washing. Always wash hands before giving pressure ulcer care. Keeping bed sheets and air mattress clean will help as well. (Always wear gloves with open wounds.)



How and Where Can You Get a Pressure Ulcer?

Pressure ulcers happen when there is a constant ‘pressure’ in an area of skin, usually over pointy bony areas such as the tailbone, heel or hip. Pressure ulcers can also form on the knees, ankles, shoulder blades, back of the head, skin folds and spine. The skin becomes squeezed between the bony area and an object (such as a mattress or a chair).

Caregiver

Any changes in how the skin looks or a change in color over the bony prominences (such as the ankle, hip or tailbone) could be the start of a pressure ulcer.

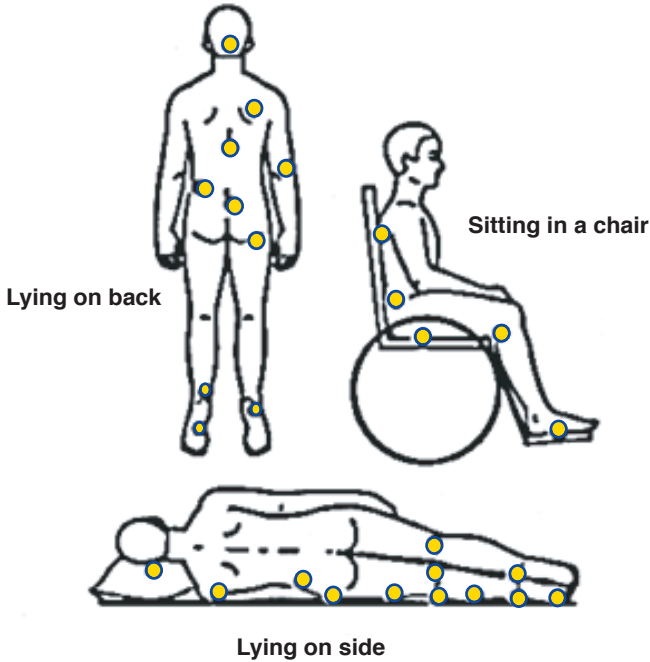


Pressure ulcers can be as simple as redness on the top of the skin to as life-threatening as an open sore that begins at the bone and breaks through the skin.

Caregiver

In light-skinned people, a red skin spot that won't go away even when you change body positions could be the beginning of a pressure ulcer. In dark-skinned people, the spot has a blue tone, or the area may feel hard and warm to the touch.

Pressure Points



The marks on the figures show the places on the body that are most at risk for a pressure ulcer to form.

Caregiver

Aging skin

The skin gets thinner and more fragile as we get older, so be extra careful and protective of aging skin.

Reduced Mobility

Those who are able to move should walk or do exercises in the bed or chair to help with blood flow. Those who cannot feel pain should be watched carefully for pressure ulcers.

For those at risk for pressure ulcers who spend most of their time in bed:

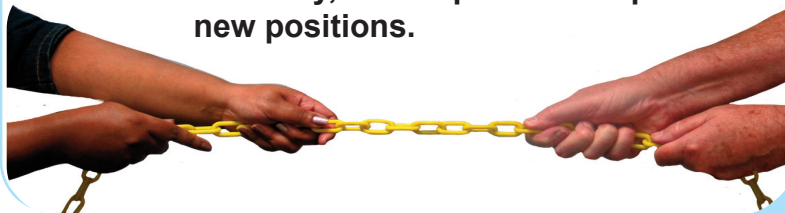
- ★ Change position every two hours.
- ★ Keep ankles and knees from touching each other using a pillow or air cushion.
- ★ Use heel cushion to protect the heel.
(Foot WAFFLE® or WAFFLE® Heel Elevator)
- ★ Never drag or pull on the body to change positions.
- ★ Place those who are at risk for pressure ulcers on an air mattress. (WAFFLE® Air Mattress Overlay)

For those at risk of pressure ulcers who spend most of their time in a chair:

- ★ Change positions at least every hour.
- ★ Shift weight every 15 minutes, if possible.
- ★ Use a seat cushion to help prevent pressure ulcers.
(WAFFLE® Seat Cush-

Caregiver

Pulling a patient's body across the bed to change a position can hurt the skin, and possibly a caregiver's back. Products, such as the WAFFLE® Air Mattress Overlay, will help move the patient to new positions.



See www.waffle.com for educational information.



Nutrition

Without a balanced diet, the wound may not easily heal. A healthcare professional should be called with any signs of: weight loss, poor appetite, too little food and fluids, severe diarrhea and general weakness.

Examples of foods that promote wound healing:

Foods Rich in PROTEIN:

Meats, beans, milk, cheese, peanut butter, eggs, cottage cheese, ice cream, yogurt.

Foods Rich in VITAMIN C:

Oranges, strawberries, broccoli, tomatoes, cantaloupe, lemons.

Foods Rich in VITAMIN A:

Liver, greens, carrots, egg yolks, sweet potatoes.

Foods Rich in ZINC:

Shellfish, fruit juices, baked potatoes, oatmeal, spinach.

Foods Rich in IRON:

Liver, sardines, tuna, raisins, peas, prune juice, dried peaches.

Foods Rich in VITAMIN E:

Liver, whole grain products, green leafy vegetables, egg yolks.

Caregiver

Offer small meals more often or add a healthy snack. And try a variety of foods...what doesn't sound good today may be more likeable tomorrow. Call a healthcare professional for advice.

Loss of Bladder or Bowel Control

People who are unable to hold or control their bladder (urine) or bowel movements (stool) are at risk for pressure ulcers. Urine and bacteria in stool weakens the skin.

Urine and stool can cause infection in a pressure ulcer making the ulcer hard to heal. Make sure the skin is always kept clean and free from urine and stool. Use mild cleaners to gently clean the skin. Talk with a healthcare professional about skin barriers and ointments to help keep moisture away from the skin.

Incontinence pads or adult diapers are often helpful in keeping skin drier. But when soiled, always remove them and clean skin immediately.



When caring for people with loss of bowel or bladder control:

Treat skin very gently.

Clean skin as soon as it is soiled.

Protect skin with cream or ointment.

Use absorbent pads (WAFFLE Wonder Dry reusable pad) or disposable diapers with a quick drying surface.

Hydration and Dehydration

Dehydration means your body does not have as much water and fluids as it should. Vomiting and diarrhea are common causes. Also, the elderly may cut back on fluids to gain better bladder control. To help avoid dehydration, offer small sips of liquid throughout the day. Dehydration slows down the body's healing process and may be life-threatening. Consult a medical professional if you suspect dehydration.



The Heel is at Risk for a Pressure Ulcer

The heel is at high risk for pressure ulcers, especially when a person spends most of their time in bed. The skin and padding covering the heel bone is thin and can press against the surface (bed) causing a sore.

A heel protective device that lifts the heel from the bed and helps keep the foot flexed in its normal position is a good idea for people who spend most of their time in bed.



Caregiver

People at risk for heel ulcers should have their feet checked daily for signs of redness or breaks in the skin. Remove all coverings on the foot and look around the foot and heel.

People who are at risk or have a pressure ulcer on the heel should use the Foot WAFFLE® or WAFFLE® Heel Elevator.

Foot Care

Poor blood flow to the feet or toes may result in serious infections or sores. With this in mind, here are some helpful foot care tips:



- ★ Never expose feet to hot or cold temperature or strong chemicals.
- ★ Wash and pat dry feet thoroughly. (Do not rub or soak feet.)
- ★ Avoid going barefoot.
- ★ Wear new shoes only for short periods of time.
- ★ Check inside shoes for any objects that could injure feet. (Especially those with diabetes or loss of feeling in this area.)
- ★ Use a mirror if seeing foot is hard. Ask someone to help.
- ★ Check for tenderness, redness, warmth, swelling or sores.
- ★ Keep feet clean and dry.

Caregiver

“A foot with a sore that does not hurt or heal is in great danger!”





People at Risk

Bed or Chair Most of the Time

People who must stay in a bed, a chair or a wheelchair are at high risk of getting a pressure ulcer. Make sure to use the right support surface (i.e. air mattress such as a WAFFLE® Air Mattress Overlay and WAFFLE® Seat Cushion - see product pages).

Not Able to Move

People who cannot change positions without help are at great risk of getting a pressure ulcer. People in a coma or who are paralyzed or who have a hip fracture are especially at risk. Make sure to use the right support surface (i.e. air mattress such as the WAFFLE® Air Mattress Overlay).

Loss of Bowel or Bladder Control

People whose skin is not kept free of urine, stool, or perspiration have a higher risk of getting a pressure ulcer. This extra moisture may irritate the skin.

Poor Nutrition and Fluid Intake

Pressure ulcers are more likely to form in people who cannot eat a balanced diet, or drink enough fluid.

Caregiver

A healthcare professional (i.e. doctor, nurse, etc.) should always be called when a pressure ulcer exists or when one is suspected.

Product Selection Guide

ON A BED

WAFFLE® Brand Air Mattress Overlay

For comfort and healing therapy up to Stage IV pressure ulcers.

The WAFFLE® Overlay redistributes pressure on the body while reducing shear and friction. Its low profile design offers stability and patient safety, while the hand wells assist when turning and mobilizing a patient. Air holes allow for circulation and moisture to move away from the body. A WAFFLE hand pump accompanies the overlay for quick and easy inflation. Also recommended for pain management. Medicare Code: EO197.



ON A FOOT

WAFFLE® FootHold

WAFFLE® FootHold with Splint

The WAFFLE® FootHold suspends the heel off the surface while an adjustable, soft flow gel pad cradles the calf, achilles and malleolus. The product includes an optional Secure Stick® sole for walking.



The WAFFLE® FootHold with Splint also suspends the heel off the surface while an adjustable, soft flow gel pad cradles the calf, achilles and malleolus. The splint aids in positive foot and ankle support for foot drop, ankle contractures, lateral rotation and neuro-deficiency. The attached Anti-Rotation Bar folds out and locks into place. The product includes an optional Secure Stick® sole for walking. Medicare Code: L4396



WAFFLE® Heel Elevator

Heel and lower extremity protection for comfort and healing thru Stage IV pressure ulcers.

The Heel Elevator elevates and cradles the calf. Cotton lining and venting holes keep the patient cool, dry and comfortable. One size fits most. Shipped inflated. Medicare Code: EO1399



ON A CHAIR

WAFFLE® Seat Cushion and Pad

For comfort and healing therapy up to Stage IV pressure ulcers.

The seat cushion's low profile is designed for safety and convenience getting in and out of chairs. Air holes allow circulation, heat and moisture dissipation. Recommended for all seating applications. Optional cover available for seat cushions. Shipped inflated. Three cushion sizes available.

The chair pad is a perfect fit to protect the patient's entire body. The long form of the pad contours and cradles the body and provides a layer of static air between all of the body's major pressure points and the chair. Its low profile design allows for easy entry and exit, and adjustable straps secure pad and provide proper fitting to the chair.



WAFFLE® Bariatric Cushion

For comfort and healing therapy up to Stage IV pressure ulcers.

The seat cushion's low profile design and diamond hole pattern maximizes the area of contact to help relieve pressure. Air holes allow circulation, heat and moisture dissipation. Recommended for all seating applications. Weight tested to 700lbs. Dimensions: 22x28x2. Optional cover available.



