

## Be Active in Your Health Care!

Reduce your risk of getting pressure ulcers. Get your family and health care team involved in pressure ulcer prevention.

### Become involved in your care:

- Ask questions.
- Tell your care team about your needs and concerns.
- Understand what and why things are being done.
- Know what is best for you.
- Do what you can to take care of your skin.
- Remember that comfort and good posture are important.
- Eat healthy foods. Protein and calories are very important. Healthy skin is less likely to be damaged. If you are unable to eat a normal diet, talk to your health care provider about food supplements. Ask to speak to a dietitian (a specialist).



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Ask  
Prevent  
Aware

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Ask

## Help Us Take Care of Your Skin

Read about information for you and your family on pressure ulcers and how you can assist your health care team in preventing them.



## What is a Pressure Ulcer?

A pressure ulcer, sometimes called a “bedsore,” is injury to the skin and underlying tissue usually caused by unrelieved pressure. These ulcers usually occur on the shoulders, elbows, hips, buttocks, and heels (areas found over bony parts of the body that sustain pressure when lying in bed or sitting for long periods of time). They begin as reddened areas, but can damage skin and muscles if not treated promptly.

## What Causes Pressure Ulcers?

Pressure ulcers occur when pressure on the skin squeezes tiny blood vessels that supply the skin with nutrients and oxygen. When the skin’s blood supply is cut off for too long, tissue dies and pressure ulcers form. A reddened area may be the first sign that tissue is dying. Pressure ulcers can also be caused by sliding down in a chair or bed. This stretches or bends blood vessels, causing pressure ulcers. Even slight rubbing or friction on the skin may cause minor pressure ulcers that can quickly worsen.

## Am I at Risk?

The following factors increase the risk of pressure ulcers:

- Inability to change positions
- Loss of bladder or bowel control
- Decreased mental awareness
- Poor nutrition and fluid intake
- Decreased sensation to an area
- Being significantly underweight

Pressure ulcers are serious! They can lead to many complications such as pain, infection, and a slower recovery from health problems!



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## Your Role in Prevention of Pressure Sores

1. Limit pressure by moving around as much as possible. Change position every two hours and shift your weight every 15 minutes while in a chair.
2. Avoid friction or rubbing your heels against the bed.
3. Allow a member of the care team to inspect your skin daily.
4. Safeguard your skin from moisture.
5. Prevent dry skin by using creams or oils.
6. Don't rub or massage over bony parts of your body.
7. Keep your skin as clean as possible.
8. Talk to a member of the care team about a special mattress or cushion to relieve pressure.
9. Avoid lying directly on a hip bone when you are lying on your side.
10. Position yourself so that your weight is evenly distributed – pillows may be helpful.
11. Try to keep the head of your bed as low as possible. If you need to raise the head of the bed, try to raise it to the lowest point possible for short periods of time.
12. Ask your care team questions when you are in doubt!
13. Take control of your health care and eat healthy foods to promote healthy skin.