What can I or my carer do?

There are ways you can reduce the risk of developing pressure ulcers.

- Keep moving. It is important to move and change your position as often as you can. Your nurse will teach you or your carer how to keep your weight off bony areas of your body.
- Check your skin for signs of pressure damage at least once a day. If skin is darker or redder than usual, do not continue to lie or sit on that area and speak with either your nurse or doctor.
- Protect your skin. Use mild or baby soaps that do not dry out the skin. Dry carefully, without rubbing hard, especially between the toes, groins and under the breasts. Keep your skin moisturised by applying a simple moisturiser. If you suffer from incontinence wash your skin with a gentle soap immediately and pat dry. Also, speak to your nurse who will advise on how best to deal with the problem.
- Eat well and drink enough. Your diet should include: meat, fish, poultry or alternatives; fruit and vegetables; bread, potatoes, cereals; milk and dairy foods. Have 6-8 drinks a day.

Comments, concerns or complaints? If you have any comments, concerns or complaints and you would like to speak to somebody about them please telephone 01773 525119

What will the nurse do?

Your nursing team will assess your risk of developing pressure ulcers. This will include checking your skin and asking you some questions. They will advise on:

- How to check you skin
- Diet and fluids
- Correct sitting and lying positions
- How to adjust your sitting and lying position
- How often you need to move or be moved
- Supporting your feet
- Keeping good posture
- Which equipment you should use and how to use it.

If you have a pressure ulcer it will be examined by the nursing team who will record where it is, its size and what it looks like. They may take photographs or tracings. The nurse will also grade it according to its severity—Grade 1 for an area of discolouration to Grade 4 for a deep wound that may go down to bone.

Healing a pressure ulcer may require specialist equipment and treatments including dressings and other methods of promoting healing.

Are we accessible to you?

This publication is available on request in other formats (for example, large print, easy read, Braille or audio version) and languages. For free translation and/or other format please call 01773 525099 ext 5587, or email us at: communications@dchs.nhs.uk
What is a pressure ulcer?
A pressure ulcer is an area of damage to the skin and underlying tissue caused by unrelieved pressure to that part of the body.

Pressure ulcers are sometimes called pressure sores or bed sores.

The first sign that pressure damage may be developing is usually discoloured skin which may get progressively worse and eventually lead to an open wound.

What causes pressure ulcers?

Pressure: The weight of the body pressing down on the skin. When you sit or lie in one position without moving, the blood vessels that supply oxygen and nutrients to your skin are squeezed and become blocked. If this happens for a long time, skin tissues will become damaged and a pressure ulcer forms.

Shear: The layers of the skin are forced to slide over one another or over deeper tissues. This can happen if you slide down, or are pulled up, a bed or chair or when you are transferring to and from your wheelchair.

What should I look for?

- Skin over a bony area is painful
- Persistent discolouration of an area of skin; red, purple, blue, black
- Blisters
- Area of skin that feels hotter or cooler than usual
- Area of skin that feels different-softer, harder or more swollen than usual
- Superficial break in the skin like a graze or crack
- A black or brown scab
- A deep wound.

Who gets pressure ulcers?

Anyone can develop a pressure ulcer but some people are more at risk than others if they:

- Have problems moving and need help to change their position
- Spend a long time in a wheelchair/armchair
- Are incontinent
- Have a poor diet and don’t drink enough.
- Cannot feel pain over part or all of their body
- Are seriously ill or undergoing surgery
- Are very old or very young
- Have had pressure ulcers in the past
- Are older people who are ill or have suffered an injury for example a broken hip.

What should I do if I think that I may be at risk of developing, or have, a pressure ulcer?

Speak with your nurse or with your doctor immediately. Don’t wait because pressure ulcers can develop very quickly and without proper care pressure ulcers can be very serious.

Where should I look?

Pressure ulcers are more likely to develop on bony areas of your body that take your weight.

When lying down:

When sitting down:

Speak with your nurse or with your doctor immediately. Don’t wait because pressure ulcers can develop very quickly and without proper care pressure ulcers can be very serious.