How to prevent pressure ulcers
A guide for patients and carers
What are pressure ulcers?
Pressure ulcers (bed sores) are caused by a constant pressure that damages the skin and underlying tissues. They can range from reddened skin to an open wound. Even slight rubbing or friction on the skin may cause pressure ulcers.

Where on the body can you get a pressure ulcer?
You can get a pressure ulcer anywhere on the body, however, pressure ulcers are most common over bony areas regardless of body size/shape.

What are the risk factors?
Many pressure ulcers can be prevented. The following problems may increase the risk of pressure ulcers:

- If you have to stay in bed, a chair or a wheel chair, or you cannot change position without help you are at particular risk of developing pressure ulcers.
- Skin irritation may occur if you cannot keep your skin free of urine, faeces.
- If you are not eating and drinking well, your skin can be damaged more easily and pressure ulcers will take longer to heal.
- Being in pain may lead to reluctance to change your position regularly.

How can I prevent pressure ulcers?
Skin care:
- Inspect your skin at least once a day, especially over bony areas.
- Keep skin dry and clean.
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Lying in bed
- Change position regularly.
- Avoid lying on creased bedclothes and crumbs.

Sitting in a chair:
- Change position regularly.
- Avoid using ring cushions as they can cut off blood supply to the vulnerable bony area.
- Sit upright and make sure you are well-supported.

Continence:
- Clean skin as soon as it is soiled.
- Discuss continence problems with your district nurse or doctor.

Moving:
- Reduce friction by lifting not dragging when changing position or moving.
- If using a hoist, remove the sling once the move is completed and always use the sling with the seams facing away from the skin.

Eating and drinking:
- Eating a wide variety of foods helps your body fight disease or infection.
- Try to drink at least two litres of fluid a day.

If you have any questions please talk to your district nurse, doctor or therapist.

Tell us, we’re listening!
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