

What can I do to prevent a pressure ulcer developing?

The three most important ways to prevent pressure ulcers are to:

- ? Move as much as possible – to relieve the pressure
- ? Look after your skin
- ? Eat a balanced diet

➤ Move as much as possible.

Change your body position frequently. Unless you are instructed not to, it is recommended that you change your body position at least every 1-2 hours if you are in bed or every 15 minutes to 1 hour if you are in a chair.

➤ Look after your skin

- ? Keep your skin clean and dry at all times especially after soiling.
- ? Bathe or shower using warm (not hot) water
- ? Use a mild cleanser or soap.
- ? Pat your skin dry and do not rub vigorously with a towel.
- ? Use a moisturising lotion to prevent your skin from drying out.
- ? Avoid using talcum powder as it can cake in the folds of the skin.

➤ Eat a balanced diet.

Good nutrition and an adequate fluid intake are very important in preventing pressure ulcers. You should have regular daily intake of lean meat, fish, carbohydrates, fresh fruit and vegetables and plenty of water.

If you have a poor appetite you should enquire about nutritional drink supplements. You can get these on prescription from your GP.

Where can I get more information?

You can get more information on prevention of pressure ulcers from your GP or Public Health Nurse.

If in hospital you can get information from:

Wound Care Nurse:
021 4546400 or bleep 745

Wound Clinic: – 021 4922440

Websites: www.patient.co.uk and
www.hse.ie



Pressure Ulcers
Patient/Carer
Information Leaflet

What is a pressure ulcer?

A pressure ulcer is an area of damage to the skin and underlying tissues. They are also known as pressure sores or bed sores.

Why are they important?

Pressure ulcers can happen quickly, so it is important to heed warning signs to prevent them occurring or getting worse. If left untreated they can lead to deep wounds with increased risk of infection and may even need surgery.

They can be painful and delay your recovery which leads to a longer stay in hospital. They can take a long time to heal. The goal is to find and correct problems before pressure ulcers form.

How do they occur?

Pressure ulcers are usually caused by constant unrelieved pressure to an area of the body. The constant pressure squeezes the blood vessels which provide oxygen and nutrients to the skin and underlying tissues. When the skin is starved of nutrients and oxygen it begins to die and a pressure ulcer forms. They can also be caused by friction between bedclothes and skin or being pulled or dragged up the bed or chair.

Am I at risk of developing an ulcer?

You may be at risk of developing pressure ulcers for a number of reasons, including:

- **Problems with movement**

Your ability to move may be limited or you may be unable to move. This may be due to a variety of causes for example spinal cord injury, old age or a long-term illness such as osteoarthritis.

- **Problems with sensitivity to pain or discomfort**

Some conditions (for example diabetes, stroke) may reduce your sensitivity to pain or discomfort so that you are not aware of the need to move.

- **Poor circulation**

Poor circulation caused for example by vascular disease or heavy smoking may increase your risk of pressure ulcers.

- **Moist skin**

You may be at increased risk if damp skin caused for example by incontinence, sweat or a weeping wound that is not kept clean and dry.

- **Pressure ulcers in the past**

Scar tissue from a previous pressure ulcer is weaker and more prone to further damage.

- **Inadequate diet or fluid intake**

Poor diet may cause you to be malnourished. Lack of fluid intake may lead to dehydration. Losing too much weight can lead to loss of padding over bony points.

Where do pressure ulcers occur?

Pressure ulcers can occur on any part of the body but are more likely to occur on the bony parts of the body where there is less padding. See diagrams below:

