

# Preventing Pressure Ulcers

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A guide for adults at risk of pressure ulcers

**Infection Prevention and Control**

**Patient Information Leaflet**

## **Did you know...?**

Pressure ulcers are often known as pressure sores or bed sores. A pressure ulcer is an area of damaged skin and flesh.

It is usually caused by sitting or lying in one position for too long without moving; or by rubbing or dragging your skin across a surface. A pressure ulcer can develop within just 25 minutes. It will usually start with the skin becoming slightly redder, warmer or darker than usual. This can go on to become blister-like or an open wound. Over a longer time period this can become larger and cause serious harm in extreme cases. Pressure ulcers are most likely to develop on parts of the body where your bones are closer to the surface.

**It is vital that healthcare staff work with patients, carers and relatives to prevent pressure ulcers.**

## **What can you expect from your nurse/ healthcare professional?**

An initial assessment will be used to identify your risk of developing a pressure ulcer. If you are at risk, some of the following may be implemented:

- Pressure-relieving mattresses / cushions
- Regular reassessment of your skin and any changes in your health
- Advise you on how often you need to move or be moved
- Offer advice/placement of correct sitting/ lying positions for you
- Assessment of your nutritional requirements
- Discussions of your concerns/needs

## **Who is at risk?**

Anybody! However, people at an increased risk are those who:

- Have problems moving
- Cannot feel pain over part or all of their body
- Are incontinent

- Are seriously ill or undergoing surgery
- Have had pressure ulcers in the past
- Have a poor diet
- Don't drink enough
- Are very old or very young
- Suffer with anaemia
- Have poor circulation
- Patients with a cognitive disability

### **Things to look out for:**

- Red patches on light-skinned people
- Bluish/purplish patches on dark-skinned people
- Blisters or damage to skin
- Patches of hot skin
- Swelling
- Patches of hard skin
- Patches of cool skin
- Pain

**Try not to worry. Pressure ulcers will sometimes occur even if you are doing everything you can.**

**Please do not blame yourself!**

### **How can you protect yourself?**

Help by taking responsibility and ownership for prevention of pressure ulcers.

### **Keep moving**

One of the best ways of preventing a pressure ulcer is to reduce, or relieve, pressure on areas that are vulnerable to pressure ulcers (bony parts of the body) by regular changing of position. This can be as simple

as standing up, or being assisted in a new laying position dependent upon your needs.

## **A good diet**

Eating well and drinking sufficient water is essential. It is particularly important for people at risk of developing a pressure ulcer or those already with a pressure ulcer.

## **Skin check-up**

Ask your relative/carer to check your skin for signs of pressure ulcer damage.

Ask staff about heel offloading - heels are a very high risk area!

## **Leaflet Details**

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## **Other formats**

If you would like to receive this information in an alternative format, then please contact : 01539 795497.

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<http://www.UHMB.nhs.uk/> or contact Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS): 01539 795497.

## **Useful Contact Details**

NHS 111 (for 24 hour urgent health advice): telephone 111

## **Your Information**

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## **Evidence**

Details of the evidence used in writing this leaflet are available on request from: Patient Information Officer at 01524 512476.

## **Feedback**

We appreciate and encourage feedback. If you need advice or are concerned about any aspect of care or treatment, please speak to a member of staff or contact PALS on 01539 795497.

UHMBT is a no smoking Trust. Smoking is not permitted on any of the hospital sites. You can contact the NHS North Lancashire Stop Smoking services on the number below:

NHS Quit Squad - **0800 328 6297**

If you live in Cumbria, please call **0300 013 3000** to find a local pharmacy who are offers 1-2-1 support and nicotine replacement therapy.

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