

Pressure Injury Prevention

A pressure injury is sometimes called a bedsore, pressure sore/ulcer or a decubitus injury. It is an injury to the skin and tissue under it from constant pressure. The pressure on the tissue over a bony area limits the blood supply to the skin and tissue. This limits oxygen and nutrition to the area. If the tissue is starved for too long, it dies. This turns into a pressure injury.

Pressure injury can be:

- A red or purple spot on the skin
- A blister
- An open sore
- A deep wound

These sores can spread into the muscle and bone. Pressure injuries can result in pain, muscle damage and infection.

Pressure Injury Prevention

Sitting for a long period of time is a common cause of pressure injuries. Change your position often while sitting. This will take pressure off your skin and prevent a pressure sore from starting or help a pressure injury to heal. These position changes are called “pressure relief” and should be performed every 15-20 minutes to keep good blood flow for healthy skin and tissues. Pressure relief can be performed different ways depending upon your strength and type of wheelchair.

Wheelchair Pushups

This takes pressure off the bones in your buttocks and increases blood to the skin and muscles. You will use arm strength and balance.

1. Lock wheelchair brakes.
2. Push down with your arms on the arm rests or wheels to raise your hips up off the seat.

3. Hold this position for at least 30 seconds or repeat “pushup” 10 times.
4. Repeat every 15-20 minutes.



Weight Shifting in Chair

Weight shifting takes pressure off the bones in your buttocks and increases blood to the skin and muscles. You need less strength to do this.

1. Lock wheelchair brakes.
2. Lean right as far as you can to lift left buttock off the seat.
3. Repeat on the left side.
4. Lean forward as far as you can to lift right buttock off the seat.



5. Reach for your toes or rest elbows on your knees.



6. Hold each position at least 30 seconds.
7. Repeat every 15-20 minutes.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 9/2024. University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#7616

