Pressure Injury Prevention



PATIENT INFORMATION

What is a pressure injury?

A pressure injury is damage that occurs to the skin and underlying tissue caused by unrelieved pressure to an area of the body. This can happen from lying in bed, sitting in a wheelchair or chair for too long, the rubbing of the skin against the mattress or chair. The most common places for pressure injuries are where the bones are close to the skin e.g. heels, hip, elbow and bottom, or even your ears from oxygen tubing.

A pressure injury can also be called a pressure ulcer, pressure sore, or bedsore they can often develop quickly. This can happen to anyone and range from a minor wound (redness or a graze) to a deep wound which can be painful, become infected, leave scars and delay your recovery.

How does a pressure injury happen?

The blood supply to the skin is damaged when a boney part of the body presses against a hard surface e.g. mattress, floor or chair. This can cause the skin to become either reddened or form a wound.

Reddening of the skin that disappears after pressure is removed is normal and not a pressure injury.

Who is at risk?

Anyone of any age can get a pressure injury, but is more likely to happen if you:

- Are seriously ill or unconscious
- Have had major surgery
- Have problems changing position by yourself
- Have poor sensation e.g. if you have diabetes or spinal cord damage
- Have an epidural or local anaesthetic that affects sensation or movement
- Are very overweight or underweight
- Are not eating or drinking very well
- Have fragile or scarred skin
- Have previously had a pressure injury
- Have loss of bowel or bladder control

Prevention is the key

Areas of the body at risk



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How can you protect your skin from pressure injury?

- take good care of your skin
- check your skin everyday.

Tell a nurse or doctor if you notice changes such as:

- red patches on light skinned people that do not go away.
- bluish/purple or darker brown/black patches on dark skinned people that do not go away.
- swelling
- red and shiny skin, or hard cracked skin and/or any pain to your skin.

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DO'S

- keep moving or change your position often.
- ensure you are sitting correctly in the chair.
- eat and drink a good balanced diet.
- stop smoking.
- keep your skin clean and dry.
- moisturise your skin to keep it hydrated and prevent it from breaking down.
- tell a nurse or carer when your bed linen is damp, creased or has crumbs.
- ask for help to move yourself correctly to prevent dragging your skin.
- check shoes for any lumps and bumps before placing on your feet.

DON'TS

- do not massage areas over bony parts of the body.
- do not use talcum power as it may cause skin irritation and pressure injury.

What about if you are in a chair or wheelchair?

- ask about using a pressure relieving cushion for reducing pressure. Do not use a donut shaped cushion as these can prevent blood flow to the skin.
- change your position frequently when sitting in a chair or bed. If you can not do this by yourself, ask someone to help you. Ask your health professional how frequently you should change position, as this can vary depending on your skin.

Why nutrition is very important

Eating a balanced diet with enough calories and protein helps to keep you healthy and protects your skin from damage. Drinking enough fluid each day will help keep your skin hydrated. Let your nurse or doctor know if you are losing weight or having trouble eating, they may ask a dietitian to see you for some more specialised advice.

Your notes

Contact us

Capital & Coast DHB Phone: (04) 385 5999 www.ccdhb.org.nz

Email: info@ccdhb.org.nz

Acknowledgement

CCDHB gratefully acknowledges the assistance of Whanganui DHB in the development of this patient information.