

## What is a pressure injury?

A pressure injury can happen when the blood supply to an area of skin is reduced by pressure. Bony areas are most at risk.

Pressure injuries may look minor, but can lead to serious injury and infection.

## What to look for.

The signs to look for (especially on skin over bony areas) are:

- Red/purple/blue skin
- Blisters
- Swelling
- Dryness or dry patches
- Shiny areas
- Cracks, calluses or wrinkles



Redness on the skin may not look serious, but it can hide serious damage under the surface of the skin.

## What can you do?

**Prevention is best.**

You can do three very important things:

### 1. Look after your skin

#### Daily skin check

- Check all your skin, everywhere, once every day.
- Bathe or shower in warm (not hot) water using a mild soap alternative such as QV oil.
- Dry your skin gently and thoroughly
- Avoid massaging your skin over bony parts of the body
- Use moisturiser over areas of dry skin eg. Sorbolene

#### Moisture

- Keep your skin, clothes and bedding dry
- Barrier creams can be used to reduce redness and skin breakdown from incontinence/sweating.

### 2. Eat well

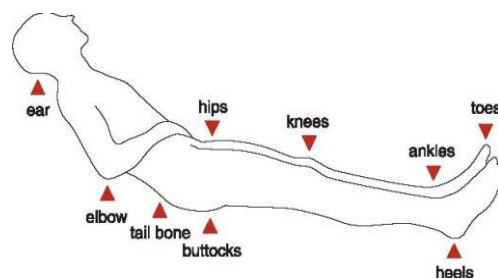
- A healthy balanced diet is important
- Eat a variety of foods
- Ask to see a dietitian if:
  - you have an existing pressure injury
  - you have lost weight without trying

### 3. Avoid prolonged pressure

#### Change position regularly

It is important to try to change your position. Speak to your Occupational Therapist or Physiotherapist re specific recommendations.

The following areas are at risk in lying and



need to be checked regularly.

#### Lying in bed

Use pillows and wedges to keep bony areas (knees and ankles) from pressing on each other.

Use the knee break on the bed prior to bringing the head rest up. This stops sliding down the bed.

## Sitting

The following areas are at risk in sitting, and skin needs to be checked daily



Check your cushion daily to ensure it is providing good coverage over the sitting bones.

It is important to have good coverage over the back of your legs and bottom in the wheelchair cushion. If you are concerned re your wheelchair set up contact your Occupational Therapist or Physiotherapist.

## Braces or Orthoses

AFO's are the most common brace, but you might also have a knee brace or arm brace.

Braces can cause pressure injuries because they:

- fit closely to your body
- are made of hard materials.

Check your skin daily. Wear a sock with the brace.

Be extra careful if:

- Your brace is new or you have started wearing it more
- You change activity
- You have physical changes such as weight gain or loss

- Your muscle tone changes e.g. after medical or medication changes

**Remember – your brace can usually be altered by your orthotists.**

Contact your orthotist if you think it needs looking at. Do **not** alter the brace yourself.

## Shoes

Shoes can cause pressure, especially on your toes. Choose your shoes carefully. Make sure:

- They are not too tight.
- Your toes don't curl under your feet
- Be extra careful with new shoes – break them in by wearing them for short times at first.

You may need extra deep or extra wide shoes. Your Orthotist can help find the best shoes for you.

## Equipment:

There are a number of pieces of equipment you may use such as a commode, alternative seating and slings for hoisting.

It is important that all the equipment you use during the day fits correctly and does not cause areas of high pressure.

Slings should be removed when not in use as they can bunch up and cause pressure injuries.

Please speak to your Occupational Therapist if you are concerned about any of your equipment.