



North Tees and Hartlepool
NHS Foundation Trust

Skin Care and Pressure Damage

**Information for
carers and patients**

This leaflet can be made available in other formats including **large print**, CD and Braille and in languages other than English, upon request.

What is skin?

Skin is an organ. It protects our body from many harmful substances such as bacteria and infection. If our skin becomes damaged it is unable to protect us and is more likely to become infected.

What happens as we get older?

As we become older our skin becomes thinner and less elastic.

This is due to a reduction in the:

- levels of a protein called collagen.
- blood supply due to damaged blood vessels.

Other factors which can have an effect on ageing skin include continence problems, smoking, radiotherapy / chemotherapy, reduced mobility, chronic illnesses and drug therapies.

Is checking the skin important?

Yes, the skin around the areas most vulnerable to damage should be assessed (checked) regularly. Those who are able to inspect their own skin should be encouraged to do so.

It is important that the skin is well cared for by regularly carrying out a thorough skin inspection. Privacy and dignity should be maintained whilst also making sure the room is well lit (preferably natural light).

You should check the skin colour and compare this to the surrounding skin for changes.

What should I look for?

You should look for:

- redness that does not blanch (turn white) under gentle pressure.
- blisters.
- heat around the affected area.
- swelling.
- any changes in colour – purple/blue/bright red/very pale.
- any skin changes associated with moisture from either urine, faeces or both.
- damp skin caused by wound leakage.

When should the skin be checked?

You should check the skin when helping with:

- toileting needs.
- bathing or showering.
- changing positions.
- dressing or changing clothes.

How should the skin be cared for?

You should:

- wash skin using a soap substitute such as Aqueous Cream or Emulsifying Ointment.
- use warm, not hot tap water.

- gently pat, not rub the washed area dry with a clean towel or soft dry cloth.

Your GP may prescribe a barrier cream such as Sorbaderm© if the skin is intact or a barrier film such as Sorbaderm© spray or foam applicator if the skin is broken for you to apply.

You must not:

- use soap, shower gel or foamy cleansers as these can change the natural pH of the skin.
- use baby or wet wipes to wash or cleanse the skin.
- use creams such as Sudocrem©, Metanium©, Drapolene© or Conotrane© as they affect the way continence pads/products work.
- place absorbent square pads on the bed especially if using an airflow mattress as they can affect the way the mattress works.

What are pressure ulcers?

Pressure ulcers are areas of damaged skin and flesh. They are also known as bed sores or pressure sores. They are caused by 2 main things:

- **pressure.** The weight of the body pressing down on the skin.
- **shear.** The layers of skin are forced to slide over one another, for example, when someone slides down, or are moved up the bed or when they are being transferred, such as from a bed to a chair.

Tight clothing or anything that stops you moving easily can also cause problems.

Pressure ulcers can develop in only a few hours. They usually start with changes to the skin; it may appear red or darker in colour, or feel hot or cold. The redness will not blanch (turn white) when lightly pressed. It may feel painful, tender or tingle.

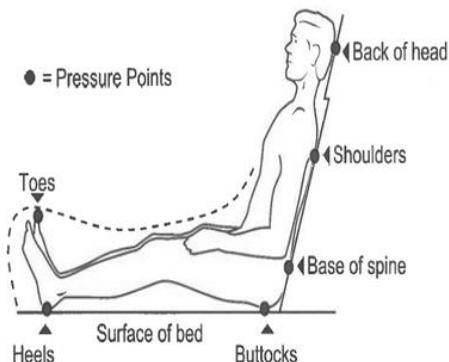
If the cause of the problem is not removed as early as possible then the skin can blister and a deep ulcer can develop. If there are any of these symptoms then **you must** tell a Nurse or GP, or report it to the senior person in charge. He or she will give you advice on what to do next.

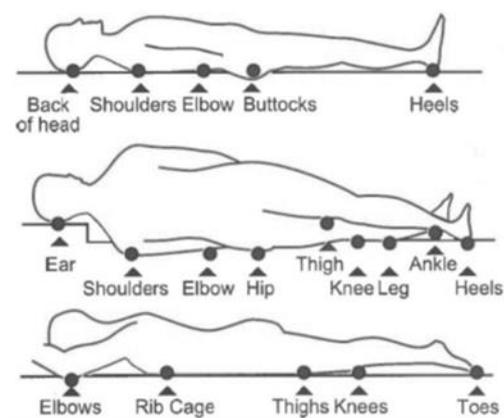
Where do pressure ulcers occur?

A pressure ulcer can occur anywhere on the body. The most common places are those parts of the body which take the weight when lying or sitting and where the bone is close to the surface, for example, buttocks (bottom), sacrum (base of spine), heels, hips, elbows, ankles, shoulders, spine (back) or back of the head. (See diagrams below.)

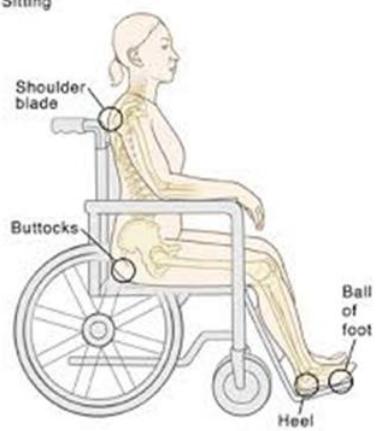
Where pressure damage may occur

Common Sites for Pressure Ulcers





Sitting



How can you manage red skin?

First check if the redness blanches (turns white under gentle pressure). If blanching is present, this suggests the redness is not pressure related and there is likely to be another reason, for example, problems with continence. If the redness is non-blanching, this is likely to be pressure damage.

A regular change of position needs to be carried out or if able, the person should be encouraged to move. Ideally no one should spend more than 2 hours in any one position.

You should continue to monitor areas at risk of pressure damage and record or report any changes.

How can you help prevent pressure damage?

In certain situations pressure damage will still occur despite best efforts to prevent it.

The SSKIN Care Plan is used in many NHS Trusts for the purpose of pressure ulcer prevention.

It focuses on 5 important interventions:

- **Skin** – are there any signs of pressure damage or redness to the skin? If there is, react to red.
- **Surface** – is there a need for a ‘special’ mattress or cushion, if so, is it working properly and being used correctly?
- **Keep moving** – regular positional changes for those who are not active or have limited mobility. They should spend no more than 2 hours in the same position.
- **Incontinence** – regular checking of pads, toileting needs and changing as needed.
- **Nutrition** – checking the person is eating and drinking well and refer to the GP for advice about diet, if needed.

What equipment is available?

Pressure relieving equipment can be either a special foam or air mattress or chair cushion.

- A special foam mattress moulds around the body distributing pressure over a larger surface area to minimise pressure damage.
- A special air mattress provides pressure relief and comfort for those who are considered to be at very high risk of developing pressure ulcers.

How can I get hold of the equipment?

To prevent pressure damage:

- in a residential care home setting this equipment should be supplied by the care home.
- at home the community nurse carries out an assessment and orders the equipment from the Tees Community Equipment Store (TCES).

If you are aware of pressure damage, the pressure relieving equipment should already be in place. If it is not then you need to ask the person in charge or a Community Nurse to complete a full assessment to be able to get the correct pressure relieving equipment.

TCES are able to supply both mattresses for double and single beds along with cushions to be used on chairs.

Equipment ordered from TCES should arrive within 2 - 3 working days, 9.00am – 5.00pm, Monday - Friday. If equipment is required urgently or outside of these hours you should contact a Community Nurse for further advice. TCES will make contact prior to delivery to ensure someone will be at home for delivery.

A Community Nurse will visit regularly to re-assess the need for the equipment. They will also check the equipment is set up correctly. If the equipment is found to be faulty then TCES should be contacted.

If the equipment is owned by a care home it is the owners' responsibility to make sure it is safe and working correctly.

It is important the elements of the SSKIN Care Plan are continued regardless of which mattress and/or cushion is being used. How regularly this is done depends on the risk of pressure damage and the amount of activity undertaken.

It should be noted that air mattresses are not suitable for everyone, for some it can reduce their ability to move. If you feel an air mattress may be reducing activity you should request a re-assessment.

Contact numbers

Single Point of Access for Community Nursing

Telephone: 01429 522500

6.00am – 10.00pm, 7 days a week

Tees Community Equipment Store (TCES)

Telephone: 01642 224205

Monday – Friday, 9.00am – 5.00pm

NHS Choices

telephone: 111 (when it is less urgent than 999)

Calls to this number are free from landlines and mobile phones or via the website at www.nhs.uk

Further information is available from:

National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE)
Guideline, Pressure Ulcers: 'Prevention and Management' April
2014

www.nhs.stopthepressure.co.uk

www.your-turn.org.uk – The Your turn campaign

www.nhs.uk/conditions/pressure-ulcers

This leaflet has been produced in partnership with patients and carers. All patient leaflets are regularly reviewed, and any suggestions you have as to how it may be improved are extremely valuable. Please write to the Quality Assurance Team, University Hospital of North Tees or email: patientinformation@nth.nhs.uk

Comments, Concerns, Compliments or Complaints

We are continually trying to improve the services we provide.

We want to know what we're doing well or if there's anything which we can improve, that's why the Patient Experience Team is here to help.

Our Patient Experience Team is here to try to resolve your concerns as quickly as possible. If you would like to contact or request a copy of our PET leaflet, please contact:

telephone: 01642 624719

Monday – Friday, 9.00am – 4.00pm

Messages can be left on the answering machine and will be picked up throughout the day.

freephone: 0800 092 0084

Email: patientexperience@nth.nhs.uk

Out of hours if you wish to speak to a senior member of Trust staff, please contact the hospital switchboard who will bleep the appropriate person.

telephone: 01642 617617

24 hours a day, 7 days a week

The Patient Experience Team is available to discuss your concerns in person Monday – Friday, 1.30pm – 4.30pm. The office is based on the ground floor at the University Hospital of North Tees.

Data Protection and use of patient information

The Trust has developed a Data Protection, Caldicott and Disclosure Policy (IG5) in accordance with the Data Protection Legislation (General Data Protection Regulations and Data Protection Act 2018) and the Freedom of Information Act 2000. All of our staff respect this policy and confidentiality is adhered to at all times. If you require further information please contact the Information Governance Team.

telephone: 01642 383551 or email: information.governance@nth.nhs.uk

University Hospital of North Tees, Hardwick, Stockton-on-Tees. TS19 8PE

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