

Our Pressure Injury Prevention Program is designed to help make your hospital stay as safe as possible.

Pressure Injury Prevention

A pressure injury is an area of damage to the skin and tissue under it. This usually happens over a bony area of the body. It may occur when there is strain on the skin from:

- Constant pressure
- Rubbing against a surface
- Too much moisture
- Poor nutrition
- Poor blood flow

The skin can become red and warm to touch, or may open and an ulcer or wound may develop.

Anyone can get a pressure injury. But some people are more likely to develop one than others.

The following can increase a person's pressure injury risk:

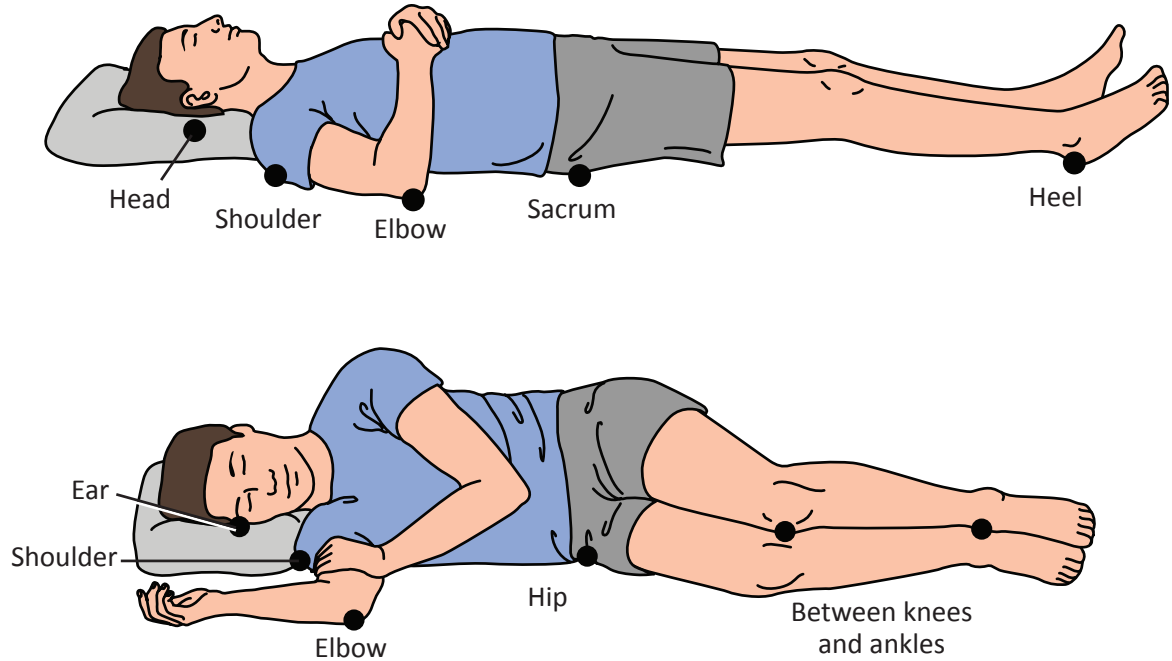
- Poor nutrition
- Moisture in the area (due to sweating, or loss of bowel or bladder control)
- Lack of mobility (unable to change positions without help)
- History of pressure injuries
- Long periods of time in a chair/bed or in the same position
- Decreased feeling to an area of the body
- Reduced mental alertness
- Advanced age
- Chronic illness

When a person is confined to bed, injuries most often develop on the:

- Back of the head
- Shoulder blades
- Hip bone(s)
- Sacrum (lower spine)
- Ears
- Between the knees
- Elbows
- Heels

See Figure 1 on the next page.

Figure 1

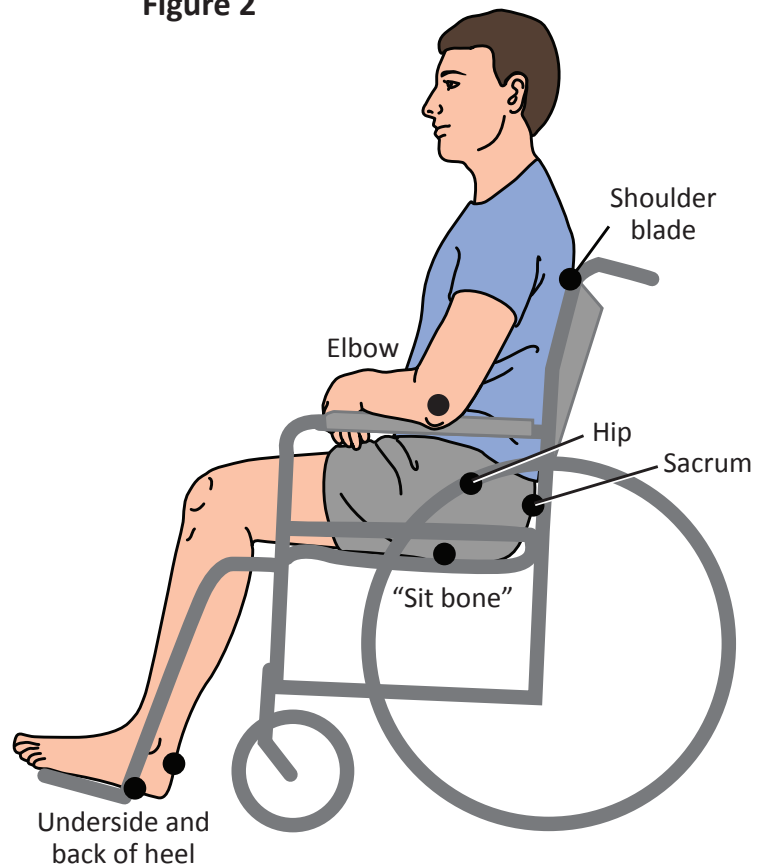


People who spend long periods of time in a chair/wheelchair may have injuries form on the skin over:

- Shoulder blades
- Elbows
- Sacrum (lower spine)
- "Sit bone"
- Heels

See Figure 2.

Figure 2



In the hospital

Prevention

The Pressure Injury Prevention Program at Northwestern Memorial Hospital has been created to help make your hospital stay as safe as possible.

The first step involves your risk assessment. The nurse will ask you about:

- Your eating habits
- How well you move, walk and change position
- Bladder or bowel leakage problems
- Current or past skin breakdown
- History of chronic illnesses

Based on your risk, a plan to prevent skin breakdown will be put into place. This plan will change as your condition changes.

Diet

A healthy diet is key to both the prevention and treatment of pressure injuries. Be sure to eat plenty of protein, such as chicken, fish, cheese and yogurt, and drink enough fluids. Your physician may prescribe supplements to provide added nutrients.

Positioning

If you spend long periods of time in the bed or chair, the staff will:

- Turn/reposition you at least every 2 hours.
- Keep the head of your bed at an angle of 30 degrees or less (except during meals or for other medical reasons). This position helps prevent you from sliding down in bed and rubbing against the linens.
- Use pillows, foam wedges, boots and/or a chair cushion to:
 - Limit pressure over bony parts and reddened areas.
 - Reduce pressure between the:
 - Mattress/chair and your body.
 - Arms, legs and the rest of your body.

Skin care

Staff will:

- Keep your skin clean and dry.
- Use pads under and between skin folds to draw moisture away from the skin.
- Apply cream or ointment to prevent dry skin or to protect your skin from stool or urine.
- Apply protective dressings on bony areas.

Your role

You can also assist in preventing pressure injuries on your skin.

- Eat the healthy meals that are provided.
- Tell staff about any soiling or skin redness/discomfort.
- Change positions often. Ask staff for help as needed. Then, steps can be taken to reduce the pressure and friction of the linen against your skin.

At home

Some of these same care guidelines can be used at home to prevent pressure injury for yourself or your loved ones. The nurse will be happy to explain these methods, so you or a family member can use them at home.

Prevention measures include the following:

- Avoid pressure over bony areas of the skin.
- Change positions every 1 to 2 hours.
- Keep skin clean and dry.
- Use cream to avoid dryness or use ointment to protect skin from stool and urine.
- Check the skin daily for redness or breakdown.
- Do not massage bony or red areas of the skin.
- Eat healthy meals.
- Place pillows under calves to prevent heel pressure by raising the heels off any surface. Do not place pillows under the knees.

Talk to your physician or nurse about proper use of special cushions, such as foam or air pads. Do not use donut-shaped cushions.