

# Prevention and management of pressure injuries

## What is a pressure injury?

A pressure injury is damage that occurs to the skin and its underlying tissues due to a lack of blood and oxygen supply.

### This damage may be due to:

**Pressure** – the weight of the body pressing down on the skin. It can also occur when an object or device, such as catheter tubing, presses on the skin.

**Shearing** – this can occur if the patient slides down in the bed or chair so the skin becomes stretched and may tear.

**Friction** – rubbing the skin causing blister or damage.

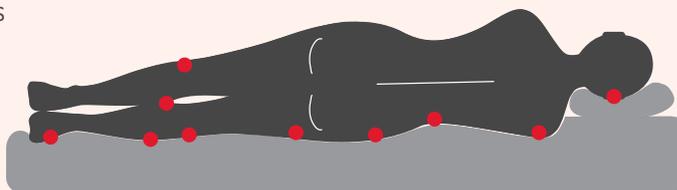
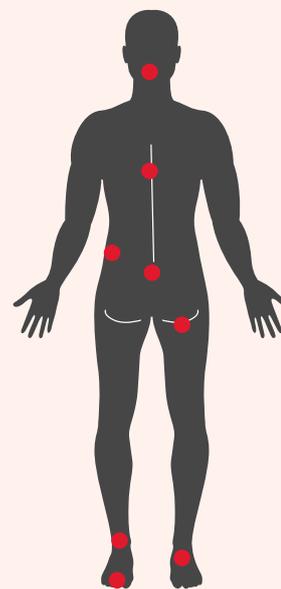
**Incontinence (loss of bladder and/or bowel control) and moisture** – this causes the skin to become sore, red and wet resulting in the skin breaking down.

The first sign that a pressure injury may be forming is usually discoloured skin which progressively worsens and eventually leads to an open wound. The most common places for pressure injuries to occur are over bony prominences (bones close to the skin), such as the bottom, heel, hip, elbow, ankle, shoulder, back and the back of the head.

## What are the warning signs?

Skin that:

- Is painful
- Looks blistered
- Changes colour, usually to red
- Feels hard or puffy
- Feels warm
- Breaks or splits



## How do I prevent a pressure injury?

If you are concerned or have had a pressure injury in the past, tell your nurse immediately.

Cabrini uses therapeutic mattresses on beds to offer pressure relief with or without the use of a pump to circulate the air.

If you are at high risk of a pressure injury, our staff may attach your mattress to a quiet pump that will circulate air underneath you.

## Hints and tips to protect your skin

### ✓ Do

- Check your skin regularly for red or discoloured marks. Report any changes to skin or pain to your nurse.
- Avoid remaining in one position for long periods of time. When in bed, or sitting in a chair, change your position frequently.
- Take good care of your skin. Keep it clean and dry.
- Use barrier cream to protect your skin
- Try to eat a healthy balanced diet and ensure you drink plenty of fluids
- If you have diabetes
  - Check your blood sugar levels regularly
  - Keep your blood sugar levels within the normal range
- Use the equipment suggested by your nurse

### ✗ Don't

- Sit on rubber ring cushions
- Massage or rub pressure areas
- Use products that will dry out your skin such as oils, powders or talcum powder
- Drag yourself over damp or creased bed clothes
- Allow incontinence sheets or products to crease up under you (avoid using them if possible)
- Don't try to manage a pressure injury yourself. Seek help from your nurse or healthcare professional.

## Management of pressure injuries

It is important that a pressure injury be treated quickly. Therefore, any pressure on the affected area should be relieved immediately to help promote healing.

The health professionals caring for you will tailor a care plan suited to your needs. Treatment may include the use of dressings to protect and heal, as well as special pressure relieving equipment.

### Remember to think SKIN to prevent and treat pressure injuries

**S** Support surface: be mindful of the surface on which you are sitting or lying

**K** Keep moving: change your position as frequently as possible

**I** Incontinence: don't allow your skin to become too moist

**N** Nutrition: eat a healthy balanced diet and ensure you drink plenty of fluids

