



# pressure ulcers

prevention is better than cure

**Zero**  
pressure  
ulcers

Anybody who sits or lies down for long periods of time is at increased risk of developing pressure ulcers. Zero Pressure is a campaign designed to help people understand the cause of pressure ulcers and therefore prevent them in the first place.

There is a website to help answer some of the questions you may have about pressure ulcers, whether it is yourself or somebody you know that might be at risk. Visit [www.zeropressure.co.uk](http://www.zeropressure.co.uk)

**For specific questions about your personal circumstances please seek advice from your healthcare professional.**

For further information on the prevention of pressure ulcers visit [www.zeropressure.co.uk](http://www.zeropressure.co.uk)

Guy's and St Thomas'  
NHS Foundation Trust





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# did you know that:

- pressure ulcers are often known as bedsores or pressure sores
- pressure ulcers are areas of damaged skin and tissue that develop when constant pressure on a part of the body shuts down the blood vessels feeding that area of skin
- pressure ulcers usually develop below the waist but can occur anywhere on the body, including the shoulders and the back of the head.

## Q Can pressure ulcers be prevented?

**A** In most cases, yes. The most important factor in preventing pressure ulcers is avoiding prolonged pressure on one area of the skin.

If you are lying or sitting for prolonged periods, you should change position regularly throughout the day. Those who cannot do this for themselves should be moved regularly – every two hours for those lying and every hour for those sitting.

Special mattresses and cushions can help to reduce pressure on sensitive areas.

Regular checking of the skin is important in order to spot the early warning signs. Please call a medical professional for advice if you notice that an area of skin has changed. This is particularly important if a person spends a lot of time in bed, on a chair or in a wheelchair.

Skin should be kept healthy, clean and dry. Use a mild soap and warm water to wash with.

Maintaining a healthy diet can help, as skin reacts to nutritional changes in the body. A well balanced diet should include fresh fruit and vegetables and plenty of fluids.

## Q What are the symptoms of a pressure ulcer?

**A** A pressure ulcer may initially appear as an area of red skin that does not disappear when you press it. It may also feel tender or warm to the touch. For people with darker pigmented skin, look for signs of skin change such as heat and swelling. The area may become painful and purple in colour, and continued pressure on this area can cause the skin to break down.

## Q Who is affected?

**A** Pressure ulcers can affect anyone, but the people who are most at risk are those with poor mobility who spend long periods in bed or in a chair and are unable to change their own position. Poor nutrition, dehydration, incontinence and poor circulation can also add to the risk of developing a pressure ulcer.

## Q How do you treat pressure ulcers?

**A** Treatment is much more difficult than prevention. Treatment will include relieving pressure and keeping the area clean. It is likely to involve regular nurse visits and lengthy treatments.

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