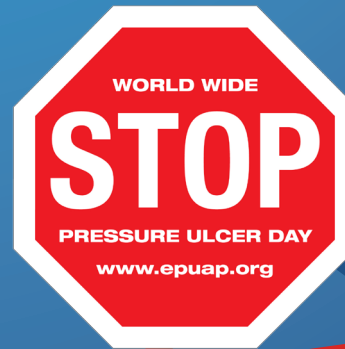


Where can I find more information about pressure ulcers?

Health professionals have formed associations devoted to understanding pressure ulcers and other wounds. Many countries in Europe now have groups of experts who can be contacted for advice and information about pressure ulcers. There is also an European Pressure Ulcer Advisory Panel who provide advice and guidance for health professionals and for the public on pressure ulcers. You can get in touch with this group at:

www.epuap.org

How can you help to stop pressure ulcers?



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When sitting in a chair or lying in bed, if you do not move for some time you may notice that your skin feels uncomfortable or even painful. When this happens we change our position to relieve that discomfort.

However many people are unable to take this simple step of changing position - for example they may be ill or close to death, be sedated during surgical operations, or unable to notice the discomfort that calls us to change position as can be the case for people with spinal cord injuries.

Staying in one position for too long without moving means blood can no longer get to the skin at the parts of our body that we are lying or sitting upon. When this happens the skin at these areas can die and a wound in the skin occurs. These wounds were known as bedsores or decubitus however today the correct term for these injuries is pressure ulcers. Unfortunately pressure ulcers are very common and most people may be aware of a family member or friend who has had a pressure ulcer.

Am I likely to get a pressure ulcer?

We avoid pressure ulcers by frequently changing our position when we sit in chairs or lie in bed, so anything that stops us making these small movements may make us vulnerable to a pressure

ulcer.

Think about pressure ulcers when -

You are ill and have to stay in bed or a chair either at home or in a hospital

You cannot move because of your illness or medical condition or when moving becomes painful.

You are going to have lengthy surgery.

If these events happen, talk to your doctor or nurse about what they will do to stop a pressure ulcer developing.

Some people have to live with the risk of pressure ulcers developing, for example those who use a wheelchair. In these circumstances health professionals will already have provided advice and assistance to help the individual, and if appropriate their friends and family, stop a pressure ulcer developing.

How do you stop pressure ulcers?

If you are likely to develop a pressure ulcer then your doctor or nurse will take steps to help stop the wound occurring. They may help you change your position at regular intervals and often will provide

special beds and cushions that help to protect your skin.

Your doctor or nurse will also be looking to help reduce or remove other factors that may weaken your skin - these can include attention to your nutrition, management of sweating or continence problems and care of your skin. If you are likely to get a pressure ulcer ask your doctor or nurse to explain how they are going to help stop the pressure ulcer developing.

What if I have a pressure ulcer?

Sometimes it is not possible to prevent a pressure ulcer developing. In this case your doctor or nurse will use appropriate wound healing interventions such as wound dressings. It is important that the steps taken to try and stop pressure ulcers first developing continue to be used during the treatment of your pressure ulcer. Ask your doctor or nurse how they are going to treat your pressure ulcer.

When we approach the end of life pressure ulcers may occur, but with attention to the steps through which pressure ulcers may be stopped fewer people will approach death with a pressure ulcer.