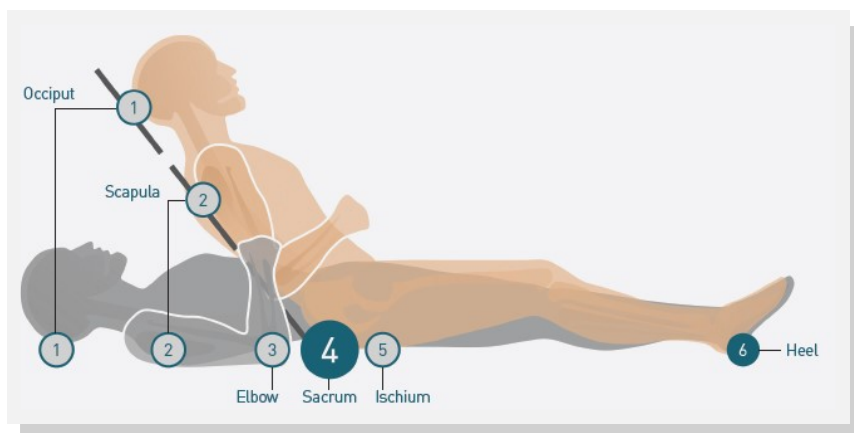


Looking After Your Skin

Preventing pressure areas

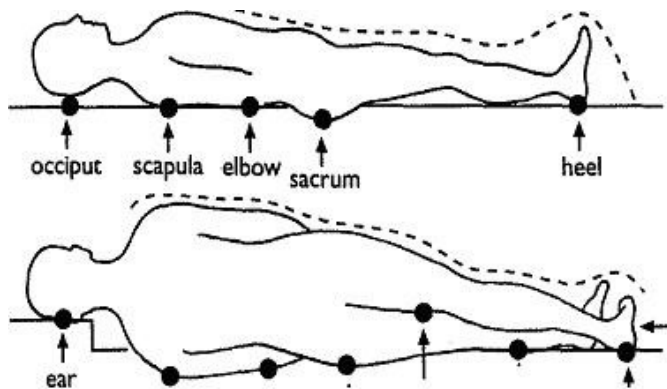


Information for Patients & Relatives



What is a pressure area?

Skin and the underlying tissues can be damaged by prolonged pressure. This can lead to the development of a pressure ulcer which can be very painful and lead to serious infection.



Bony parts of the body are particularly at risk, for example - heels, elbows spine, hips, shoulders, back of the head and the bottom.

What are the causes?

Staying in one position for a prolonged period causes a lack of blood supply to an area, which can lead to tissue damage.

Rubbing and friction can occur when your skin drags across a surface such as sheets or your chair, when you are moving from one surface to another, moving up the bed or back in the chair.

Who is at risk of pressure areas?

- ◆ People who are unwell and may be confined to bed or chair for a short spell
- ◆ People who are immobile
- ◆ People who suffer from incontinence (wetness affects the skin and its healing)
- ◆ People who's nutrition is poor or have suffered weight loss
- ◆ Those with frail skin due to age or associated with some medications
- ◆ People with diabetes
- ◆ People with areas lacking in sensation
- ◆ Those with poor circulation

What can you do to prevent pressure areas?

Changing your position regularly helps to avoid pressure areas by maintaining a good blood supply to all areas. If you are immobile you will need help to try and change your position for example alternating between sides. If you are in a chair, leaning to one side for a few seconds and then to the other will relieve pressure under your bottom.

If you are mobile, regularly standing or a short walk is beneficial.



What can you do to prevent Contd.

For those who are immobile, unnecessary friction on the skin should be avoided by carers helping you to move up the bed or back in the chair, being dragged along sheets or the chair will damage the skin. Your physiotherapist can discuss techniques for moving with your carers if necessary.

Ensuring the skin is clean and dry will help to prevent tissue damage and allow healing of any damaged areas.

Try as far as possible to eat a diet high in protein (eg: fish, meat, eggs)

Drink plenty of water, aiming to have 2 Litres per day as healthy skin is less likely to be damaged.

Avoid sharp or hard objects being in contact with your skin eg: zips, catheter bags.

What should you be looking for?

If a nurse is involved in your care, they should regularly inspect your skin for vulnerable areas. This can also be carried out by your carer. Normal skin, when pressed lightly will turn white and then return to its normal colour. A red area which remains red after being lightly pressed is showing signs of damage.

Skin should be inspected for areas of:

- ◆ Redness (may be purple / blueish areas if you have dark skin)
- ◆ Blisters
- ◆ Dryness/cracked skin
- ◆ Shiny or swollen areas

What to do if you develop a pressure area

You may already have a nurse involved in your care who can provide advice and equipment. If not contact your GP so that the appropriate services can become involved. You may require a special mattress or cushion, or there may be specific dressings to promote healing and protect the skin and tissues.



In Summary

- ◆ Check your skin for areas of redness or blisters on a daily basis
- ◆ Change your position regularly to relieve pressure
- ◆ Report any areas you suspect may be at risk to your nurse or GP
- ◆ Eat a balanced diet, high in protein and if your appetite is poor, discuss with your nurse or GP



Participation

We value our patients and families participation in developing the services we provide, listening to what you have to say and taking the appropriate action as required.

If you wish to participate please visit the participation section within our website www.accordhospice.org.uk

If you do not have access to the internet please request a leaflet.

Suggestions, Comments & Complaints

If you have any suggestions, comments or complaints about how the service can be improved, please speak to a member of staff.

If you are not satisfied with the response, please discuss your concerns directly with the Chief Executive at ACCORD Hospice:

Jacki Smart
0141 581 2000

Should you feel that your complaint has not been resolved by ACCORD Hospice, you may contact Healthcare Improvement Scotland (HIS) directly, at any stage:

Edinburgh Office:
Gyle Square
1 South Gyle Crescent
Edinburgh EH12 9EB
0131 623 4300

Glasgow Office:
Delta House
50 West Nile Street
Glasgow G1 2NP
0141 225 6999

Email: hcis.complaints@nhs.net

www.healthcareimprovementscotland.org

If required this leaflet is available in other languages & formats
