Pressure Injury (Ulcer) Prevention
Pressure Injury (Ulcer) Prevention

Protecting your skin from pressure injuries
When you (or your family member) is admitted to the hospital, the nurse will check your skin. This is to see if you are at risk for getting a pressure injury. Pressure injuries are also known as bed sores or decubitus ulcers.

What is a pressure injury?
A pressure injury is an injury to the skin and tissue under the skin. These injuries may take place on the heels, elbows, hips, or buttocks (tailbone area) - usually over bony areas. The skin gets red and may become an open sore.

What are your questions?
Please ask. We are here to help you.
What causes pressure injuries?
Pressure injuries happen when there is continued pressure on the skin (see spots on diagrams). The pressure squeezes the tiny blood vessels that supply the skin with oxygen and nutrients. Without this blood supply, over time the skin dies and starts to break open.

Sliding down in a bed or chair adds to the chance of the skin breaking. Frequent rubbing of the skin on a bed, or moisture can also add to the chance of the breaking of the skin. Injuries can happen very quickly (within hours in some cases) if the pressure, sliding, and moisture is not stopped.
You are more at risk of getting a pressure injury if you:

› Can’t move or are not able to get out of bed
› Lay or sit in one position for long periods of time
› Have stool (poop) or urine (pee) touching your skin regularly
› Eat and drink poorly
› Are overweight or underweight
› Have dry skin
› Have poor circulation
› Have little or no feeling in your limbs or parts of your body because of injury, disease, or medication
› Have lowered mental alertness (because of pain medication, surgery, or other factors)
› Have high blood sugar or diabetes
How can my healthcare team help prevent pressure injuries?

We are committed to your safety. Here are a few ways we will help you lower your risk of getting a pressure injury:

• We will assess your risk.

• We will check your skin often to see if you have any reddened or broken areas.

• We will often ask you to turn to make sure blood flow continues to all areas of your skin.

• We will ask you to get out of bed to sit or walk, or to change position in bed as much as possible. This is very important in preventing injuries and improving your overall recovery. We will help you move if you can’t do this by yourself.

• We may place your legs on pillows or put on special “booties” that keep pressure off your heels.

• We may order a special mattress that reduces the pressure on your body.

• We may give you a special cushion to protect your skin while sitting.

• We will make sure that healthcare team members with special knowledge are treating you, such as dietitians, occupational therapists, or physiotherapists.
What can I do to help avoid getting a pressure injury?

• Ask your doctor or nurse, “Am I at risk for getting a pressure injury?”

• Keep the head of your bed as low as possible when not eating. This prevents your bottom from sliding down in the bed. Rubbing or sliding on the sheets can increase the risk of skin breaking down.

• Shift your weight often while sitting or lying in bed (every 15 minutes to an hour). Leaning forward and side to side while sitting can give you needed relief.

• Use pillows to help protect bony areas from pressure.

• Eat as healthy a diet as possible. Make sure that your diet is high in protein, vitamins, and minerals. Eating enough protein is important for the healing process. If you have nutrition questions, please ask to speak to a dietitian.
• Drink 8 cups of fluid every day. This includes water, milk, and/or non-dairy drinks. Talk to your dietitian about specific restrictions.

• If you have a bowel or bladder (bathroom) accident, let your nurse know so moisture does not stay on your skin.

It is very important for you to tell your nurse or another member of your healthcare team if you see redness over bony parts of your body or feel pain, itchiness, numbness, or tingling in areas where there is pressure on your skin.