

TREATMENT

Most pressure ulcers can heal over time, but this depends on general health, diet, pressure relief, and wound care.

Treatment of pressure ulcers is similar to preventing them. For example, relieving pressure by turning and positioning and promoting adequate nutrition.

Treatment of pressure ulcers is a team effort. The team includes the resident/decision maker, care providers and healthcare experts.



Contact information

For more information about Pressure Ulcer Prevention and Management in Long Term Care please contact the nursing staff on the unit where the resident resides.



LONG TERM CARE

Pressure Ulcer Prevention and Management

Information for Families



Eastern Health



www.easternhealth.ca

WHAT IS A PRESSURE ULCER?

Pressure ulcers are also known as bed sores. They are caused by constant pressure and rubbing or friction on the skin that damages the skin and underlying tissue.

Pressure ulcers can develop in a very short time frame and may take a very long time to heal.

WHO IS AT RISK?

People who:

- are chair or bed bound and who are unable to move or change position often.
- have lost feeling in the lower part of the body.
- have major chronic health problems.
- have lost control over their bladder or bowel.
- eat poorly.
- are confused, sleepy or who have less awareness of their surroundings and how their body is positioned.



SIGNS OF PRESSURE ULCERS

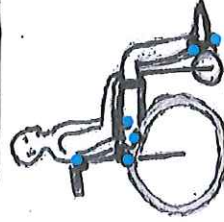
The first sign is an area of reddened skin on fair-skinned persons or a purplish/bluish area on darker persons.

The area may be warm to touch, swollen or hard and may or may not be painful.

For a person who spends most of his/her time in a bed, pressure ulcers are usually located on a bony area such as tailbone, buttocks (bottom), heels, hips, ankles, elbows, shoulder blades, back of head, and knees.

A person who spends most of his/her time sitting in a chair or wheelchair may develop pressure ulcers on the buttocks (bottom).

Common Locations of Pressure Ulcers



HOW ARE PRESSURE ULCERS PREVENTED?

If the person is *in bed*, it's important to change position and turn often, at least every two hours. If unable to move on his or her own, healthcare providers will turn and position him/her.

- for those with very limited mobility, keep heels off the mattress by placing the lower legs on pillows.
- stay off reddened areas.
- avoid lying directly on the hip, instead side-lying with the support of a pillow is preferred.
- avoid sitting all the way up except for meals.
- avoid any situation where skin rubs on sheets or other surfaces.
- use pillows or foam wedges between bony areas of the body.

If the person spends *most of the time in a wheelchair or chair*, it's important to shift weight every 15 minutes. If unable to move on his or her own, healthcare providers will reposition him/her at least every hour.

As well, it's important to:

- eat a balanced diet.
- drink plenty of fluids.
- keep skin clean and dry.

For those at risk of developing a pressure ulcer, equipment such as a special mattress, a chair pad or heel protectors may be recommended. To learn more, talk to your healthcare provider.