



FACT SHEET

How to prevent pressure ulcers

This may not be the most exciting topic to talk about, but it is a fact that **pressure sores on older people can have a devastating effect** on their well-being and can often be the tipping point between someone being cared for in their own home and their going into hospital or into a care home.

This fact sheet is for people caring for a loved one or a client. It does not replace the professional advice of a fully trained nurse and is for guidance only.

So, what are pressure ulcers?

They can be called bedsores or pressure sores. They are caused when part of the body (usually a bony area such as the hip or heel) is under constant pressure when people stay in one position for along time.

Technically, they can range from discoloured skin to open wounds

Early warning signs of pressure ulcers

Gently press and hold on the suspected area with your thumb or finger, then, when you remove the pressure, note the colour of the skin.

- If the **skin turns white** then back to the original colour- you can be assured that all is well as there is still a healthy blood flow.
- If the **area doesn't turn white and stays the same colour** as before you pressed the area, you need to consider the possibility that a pressure ulcer may be developing. In this case either contact your GP /District Nurse, or if you are an Arbour Companions & Care Carer, please contact your manager straight away.

Risks that might cause pressure ulcers

People at high risk of getting a pressure sore are those people who:

- Spend a lot of time lying or sitting in one position
- Have lost their appetite or have problems with eating and drinking
- Weigh either above or below the normal range
- Have an underlying health condition such as heart failure, circulation problems, arthritis, stroke or diabetes
- Have continence issues
- Have dementia
- Wear a cast or other appliance

What can be done to prevent pressure ulcers?

Regularly check the areas of the body that may be under pressure. These are:

- **When the person is lying on their back:** back of the head, shoulder blades, elbows, spine, sacrum, heels, toes
- **When the person is lying on their side:** side of face, shoulders, hips, knees and ankles
- **When the person is sitting:** all along their back and heels.

Arbour Companions & Carers must report daily in their client's Care Plan on the pressure areas of the client.

To prevent ulcers:

- ⇒ Try to persuade the client/loved one to avoid pushing down on their heels as they move about the bed.
- ⇒ Keep the pressure off the risky areas by moving and changing position at least every 2 hours.
- ⇒ Keep bedding loose around the pressure areas
- ⇒ Keep skin clean and dry and use a mild soap and simple moisturiser

Report any painful areas promptly to the District Nurse or GP. Help the cared for person to eat a balanced diet and drink plenty of fluids- keeping fluids easily within their reach.

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