

Bedsore

Bedsore, also called pressure ulcer, are injuries to the skin that happen when pressure is applied, like lying in bed for long periods of time. Body parts in contact with a bed or seat are at risk for bedsore.

Often starting out as redness or tenderness on the skin, bedsore can become a blister, sore, or open wound as they get worse. While the best way to handle bedsore is to prevent them from happening, bedsore may still appear even with good care. Your hospice care team can show you important steps to help prevent or lessen bedsore.

What a patient can do

- **Reposition throughout the day.** The more a position is changed, the better. Try moving every 15 minutes if possible. A patient in a wheelchair or chair can lift with their arms until their back and bottom lift off the cushions. For a patient in a bed, turning or repositioning so a different part of the body touches the bed.
- **Keep skin clean and dry.** Use gentle techniques, such as sponge baths or patting dry the skin instead of scrubbing or roughly drying the skin. Putting lotion on very dry skin or talcum powder on hard-to-keep-dry areas can also help.
- **Protect bony areas.** Place extra cushioning on areas that receive a lot of pressure, like the tailbone or shoulder blades. In bed, try to avoid sleeping directly on the hips. Instead, sleep slightly tilted to the front or back and use pillows to prop up the body. Place cushions between the knees and ankles to keep them from pressing into one another. Place a cushion under the calves to keep heels from touching the bed.

What a caregiver can do

- **Regularly change bedding and clothing.** If the patient wets the bed or has a bowel movement, try using diapers or a disposable pad underneath. Changing bedding, disposable pads, and diapers regularly helps prevent conditions that may lead to bedsore.
- **Move and reposition** a patient when they can no longer do it themselves, ideally at least every 2 hours, though more frequently is fine.
- **Check the patient's skin** on their entire body for signs of emerging bedsore. Check daily. Your hospice care team can help check when they visit.

- If there are signs of a bed sore, try to keep the area from pressing against any surfaces and **alert your hospice care team** who can help you treat the area.

What your hospice care team can do

- **Help you** treat a bedsore by keeping it clean and helping minimize further damage.
- **Show you** how to reposition the patient without hurting yourself, using safe lifting techniques or a towel or sheet underneath the patient to shift them. Your hospice care team can also help with repositioning when they are visiting.

As always, contact your hospice care team if you need any support.