



## Bedsores

Bedsores, also called pressure ulcers, are painful ulcers on the skin. Common sites are the head, back, buttocks, tailbone, knees, and ankles.

### Signs & Symptoms

- The skin may feel sore in areas where a bone is close to the skin. There may be no feeling at all.
- The skin gets irritated and red and then turns purple.
- The skin cracks and an open sore appears. The skin area can become infected.

### Causes, Risk Factors & Care

Bedsores are caused by constant pressure on the skin or frequent rubbing in one area.

Factors that increase the risk of bedsores include:

- Being confined to a bed or chair
- Urinary incontinence; poor bowel control
- Poor blood circulation and loss of sensation due to a stroke or spinal cord injury

Infected sores require antibiotics. Chronic or deep sores may also require antibiotics. If infected sores are left untreated too long, a blood infection that threatens life can result. This is rare, though. Bedsores may also need special dressings.



### Prevention/Self-Care:

- A caregiver may need to assist with these.
- Change position every 2 hours if confined to a bed and every hour if confined to a chair or as often as advised by your health care provider.
  - Check the skin daily for early signs of bedsores. Use mirrors for hard to see places. {**Note:** Redness is usually the earliest sign. Once the skin cracks or breaks down, seek medical care.}
  - Use a foam or sheepskin mattress cover.
  - Use a waterbed or a bed with an air filled mattress, such as a ripple bed. This type of airbed has a small motor that creates a rippling effect by pumping air in and out of the mattress.
  - If incontinent, wear absorbent pads or briefs.
  - Keep the skin clean and dry. Clean it right away if there is contact with urine or stool. Use soft cloths, sponges, and mild soaps. Avoid hot water. Do not rub the skin.



### *Bedsores, Continued*

- Apply cornstarch to the skin.
- Lift (do not drag or slide) an immobile person.
- Don't sit on donut-shaped cushions.
- Put pillows between knees and ankles so they don't touch.
- Use sheepskin under heels and buttocks.
- Don't massage bony body parts.
- Eat well and get adequate fluids.
- Ask your doctor about taking a vitamin C supplement.
- Handle a person with bedsore gently.
- Apply topical medication, as advised.



### Contact Doctor When:

- The skin is cracked.
- Sores show signs of infection (fever; redness; pain; heat; pus; swelling).
- Sores have not improved after 2 weeks of self-care.