

Care in the Hospital: Preventing Pressure Injuries

While in a hospital, rehab center, or assisted living center, you may be lying in bed or sitting in a chair more than usual while you heal and recover.

Staying in one position for too long, though, puts parts of your body at risk for a pressure injury.

Pressure injuries can form whenever and wherever there's constant pressure on your body.

This pressure can come from things like tubes or other medical devices, sheets, or even the mattress.

A pressure injury— or you may hear it called a bed sore— is painful, hard to treat, and takes a long time to heal.

Pressure injuries are a big concern for your care team.

That's why, while you're in their care, they'll be doing all they can to help prevent them.

The bony parts of your body— such as your elbows, shoulder blades, hip bones, and heels— are most at risk for pressure injuries.

But your care team will do a lot of things to protect you.

They will check your skin to look for any changes, such as warmth or redness.

The care team will keep your skin clean and use dressings or skin lotions for protection and comfort.

The care team will move tubes or other medical devices so that parts of your body aren't resting on them for too long.

And they'll remove the devices completely as soon as they're no longer medically needed.

The care team will also make sure that you're eating healthy foods and drinking plenty of fluids.

Good nutrition helps your skin stay as healthy as possible.

Throughout your hospital stay, someone from the care team will help to move you around in the bed or encourage you to move as often as you can.

They'll want to make sure you change positions often.

If you're in a chair or wheelchair, they will help you shift positions as much as needed.

And they'll help lift you up to relieve you from the full weight of your body.

They may use slings, pillows, or heel protectors to offer pressure relief.

And your care team may have special ways to pick you up and move you around in the bed.

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Special sheets may be used, for example.

As much as your care team works to protect you, you know yourself best.

So use the call button or talk to someone on the care team if something— like a tube or a wrinkle in a sheet—is bothering you.

And let the care team know if you feel uncomfortable or if any part of your body hurts, even if it doesn't hurt that bad.

You may be catching a pressure injury before it begins and causes a problem.

Call if you notice any changes to your skin.

These changes could include redness, warmth, or an area that's painful.

Talk to your care team if you need any help shifting positions or with washing or drying yourself.

They're trained to care for you in any situation.

It's okay to ask for help even if you feel embarrassed.

This may be a lot to think about and do while you're healing.

But knowing that your care team is trained and focused on preventing pressure injuries can help.

And if you have any questions or concerns, you can always talk to the care team.