



Pressure Ulcer Prevention in the Hospital



Overview

When you spend long periods of time in a hospital bed, you are at risk for developing pressure ulcers. These injuries, also called pressure sores or bedsores, affect the skin and the soft tissue beneath the skin. They are caused by constant pressure.

Where They Form

Pressure ulcers tend to form on places where the bony parts of your body touch the bed. Your heels, buttocks, hips, elbows and shoulders are at high risk. So are your ears and the back of your head.

Prevention

To prevent these sores from forming, you should change positions frequently. Shift your weight when possible. Change your bed's elevation. Don't stay in the same position for more than two hours at a time. Use cushions under the bony parts of your body to relieve pressure. A cushion under your calves can raise your heels off the bed. If you are sore or uncomfortable, tell a nurse immediately.

Keep Your Skin Healthy

You should also take steps to make sure your skin is as healthy as possible. Try to eat nutritious foods, and drink plenty of water. Keep your skin clean and dry. Use lotion or talcum powder as directed. Inspect your skin daily. Make sure a nurse or doctor inspects areas that you can't see. It's important to keep germs from infecting your skin. So if you have problems controlling your bladder or bowels, change soiled sheets and clothes immediately. Alert a member of your healthcare team immediately if you need help. Pressure sores are easier to prevent than they are to treat. By following these simple steps, you can avoid pressure ulcers altogether.