



Preventing Skin Breakdown

Why does skin breakdown happen?

- Pressure wounds (“bed sores”) can form when the skin presses against a bed or a chair for an extended period of time. This pressure reduces the blood flow to the skin and underlying muscles leading to tissue damage.
- Friction injuries occur as the skin is pulled across a rough surface such as cotton sheets or rough linen. Moisture due to incontinence or perspiration can make the skin more fragile. Friction looks and feels like a rug burn on the skin and often appears on the elbows, buttock, knees and ankles. These skin injuries may be very painful.

Who is at risk for skin breakdown?

- Elderly people with thin skin
- Individuals in poor health
- Those who are unable to move parts of the body without help
- Those who have lost weight and eat or drink less than normal
- Bed or chair bound patients
- Those who are not able to control their bowels or bladders (incontinent) as constant moisture on the skin causes irritation

Questions or concerns?

Call a hospice nurse at 513-891-7700. For caregiving tips visit www.HospiceofCincinnati.org/for-the-caregiver.



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Training: Preventing Skin Breakdown. ©2020 Hospice of Cincinnati

What does skin breakdown look like?

- Redness over bony areas
- In darker-skinned patients, sometimes redness appears purplish
- When a skin tear is present, friction/pressure will make those tissue injuries worse and you may have an open wound

What can be done to prevent skin breakdown?

- Turn and reposition/safely move your loved one as instructed by your hospice nurse
- Keep the patient as clean and dry as possible
- The hospice nurse may discuss use of an indwelling (internal) or condom catheter to drain urine, keeping it off of the skin
- Use a draw sheet (created by folding a flat sheet in half) to assist with turning and repositioning *
- Use pillows to keep elbows and heels off the bed
- Inspect the skin every day to watch for signs of skin breakdown such as redness, bruising, rashes, or blisters

What should I do if I find an area I suspect may be a problem?

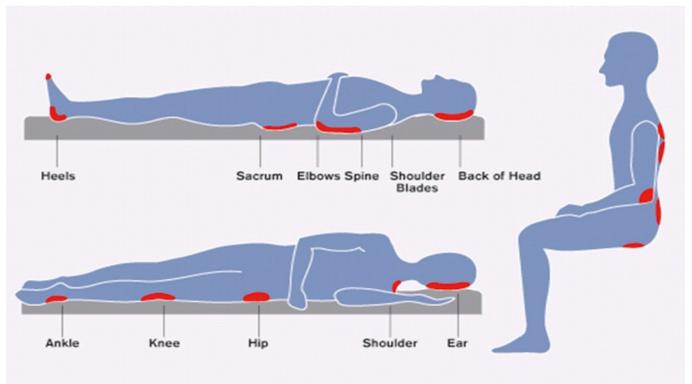
- Tell your hospice nurse.
- Try to keep that part of the body off the bed as much as possible using pillows.
- Do NOT massage or rub the area.
- Use barrier creams, as instructed by the hospice nurse.

Additional instructions:

AREA _____

AREA _____

 Healing skin breakdown IS NOT always possible. The goals are to focus on comfort, prevent infection and lower the risk of worsening breakdown.



Areas of the body at risk in different positions.

* See <https://hospiceofcincinnati.org/for-the-caregiver> for tips on caring for the bedbound patient

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