

## SKIN HEALTH

### Troubleshooting Your Skin: What To Do If You Have A Pressure Injury

If during a skin check, you or your caregivers find a red area, blister or open skin, the first step is to get off the red area right away. You need to stay off of the area until you and your team determine the cause. For example, if it's on your tailbone, alternate between lying on your left and right sides when in bed to offload pressure from that area.

Next, you need to problem solve the cause of the pressure injury, and treat the cause. Problem-solving is a useful way to deal with situations when you're not sure what to do. See below for a handy 5-step method for solving problems you encounter with your skin - there's also a PDF resource of the steps as well!

**Step 1: Identify the problem:** Start by getting a clear picture of what's wrong. Before you jump to conclusions, take the time to investigate - where is the redness located? What is the shape or pattern of the redness? Inspect your skin thoroughly and pay special attention to areas you might normally overlook.

**Step 2: Find the cause:** Once again, you want to be thorough; here are some questions to consider (remember, this is not an exhaustive list, just a place to help start your problem solving):

- Were you sitting or lying in one position too long?
- Was it in your bed? In your wheelchair? On your commode? In your car?
- Is there enough air in your cushion? Was your cushion on backwards?
- Did you do a bad transfer?
- Are you having more spasms/spasticity?
- Are your clothes or your shoes too tight?
- Was there anything new in your routine, such as a new surface or activity?

**Step 3: Brainstorm solutions:** Using the information you have, think of a number of possible solutions. You may be able to address the problem yourself and prevent the situation from getting worse. The solution will depend on the location and the cause of the wound.

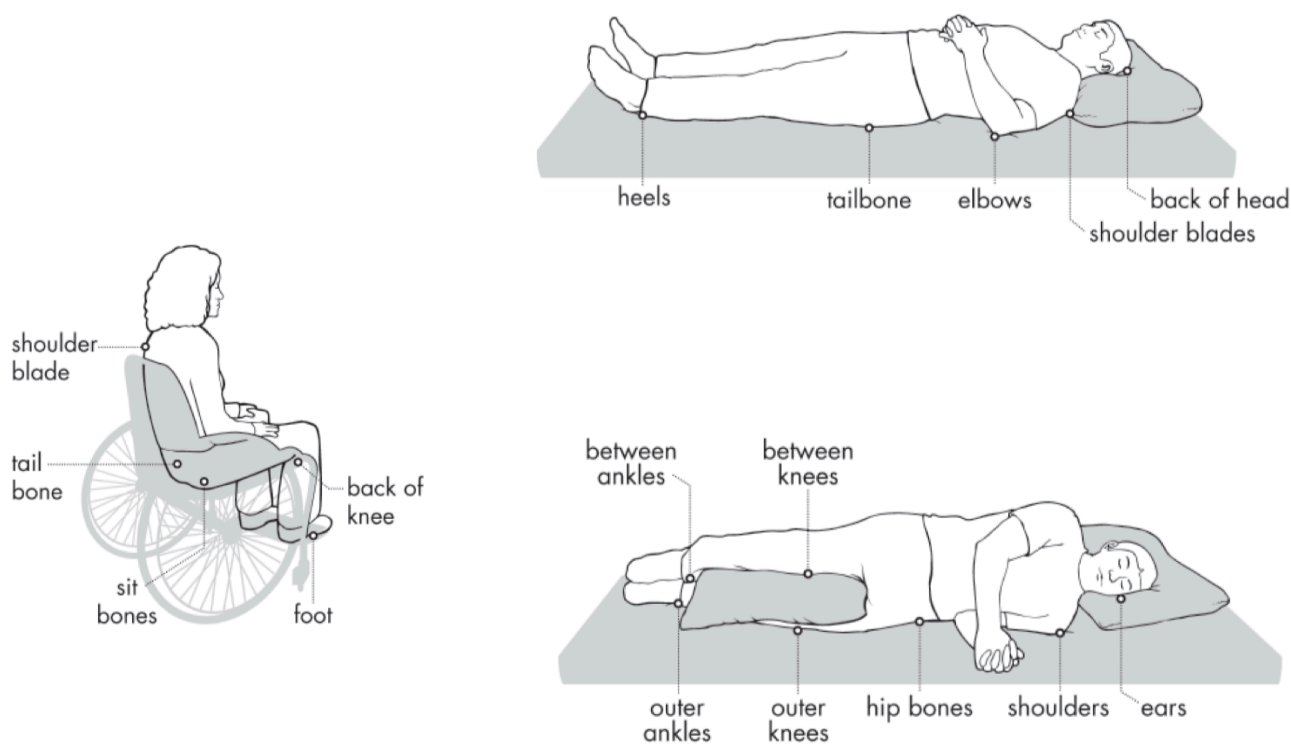
- Pressure: remove sources of pressure, offload the area
- Shearing/Friction: check your transfers, sling placement, limit raising the head of the bed
- Moisture: what's causing the excess moisture? Make sure you're sticking to your bladder and bowel routine and are on the right surfaces if moisture is an ongoing issue.



**Step 4—Try one & evaluate results:** Try one of the solutions you or your health care professional identified, starting with the one that seems likely the most likely solution. If it works...great! Just make sure to follow-up and ensure that the problem is truly solved. If it doesn't work, try another solution. You may need to repeat this step several times.

**Step 5—Know when to ask for help:** Don't try to take everything on by yourself. When it comes to something as important as your skin, it's better to be safe than sorry, so when in doubt, ask for help. You should be able to recognize the signs of a serious pressure injury that requires medical attention. In some cases, the only solution may be to get help. Talk to a health professional to learn how to manage your wound and problem solve any equipment or equipment changes that may have to occur.

**Trouble Spots:** These diagrams show common high-risk areas for pressure injury both in the chair and in bed.



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