

How to check your skin for pressure injury

What is a pressure injury?

A pressure injury is:

- an area of damage on or under the skin.
- sometimes called a bed sore or pressure ulcer

This damage can make your skin:

- sore
- change colour

IMPORTANT: Your skin does not have to be broken for damage to have happened.

Why is it important to check your skin?

Pressure injuries:

- can happen quickly
- really hurt and make you sick
- take a long time to heal
- affect how well you are able to do everyday things
- cost a lot of money
- may mean you have to go to hospital

Can I get a pressure injury?

Yes. Anyone of any age can get skin damage from a pressure injury.

You have more chance for this to happen if you:

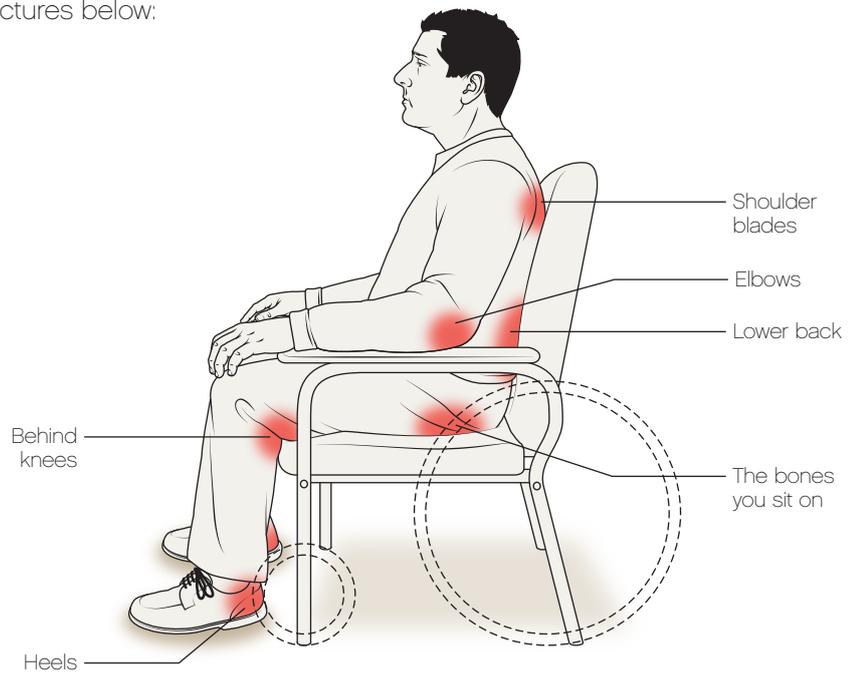
- have had a pressure injury before
- sit or lie in the one spot without moving
- drag your skin
- cannot move well because of pain
- are not eating or drinking well
- are sick or getting sicker
- cannot feel parts of your body well
- are older because as you age your skin becomes weaker
- have leaking wee or poo
- get sweaty or damp for any reason
- need someone else to care for you

A pressure injury can happen:

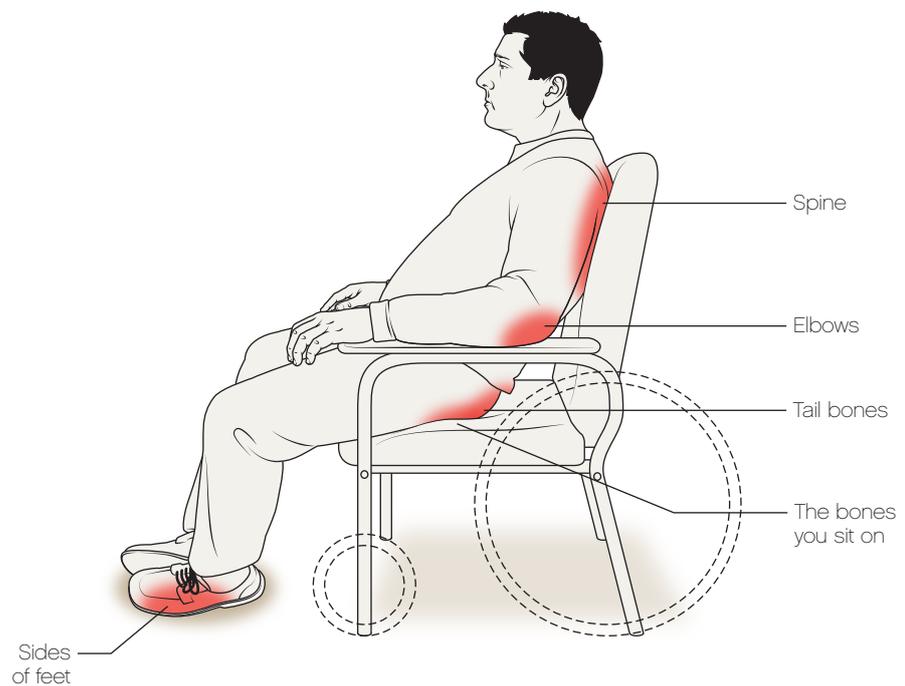
- anywhere on your body
- more often where there is a bone close under the skin

The most common parts on your body where a pressure injury can start are shown in the pictures below:

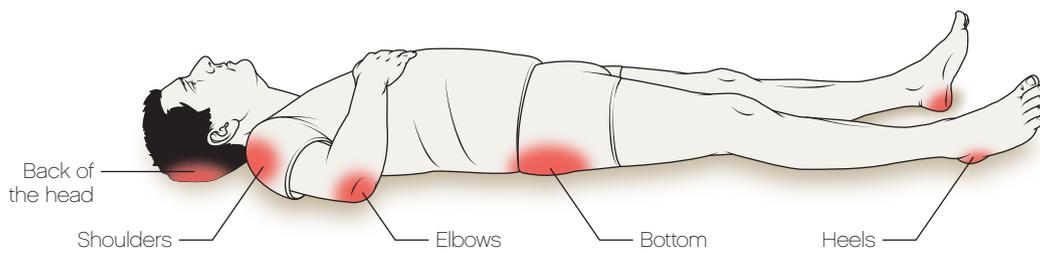
Seated upright



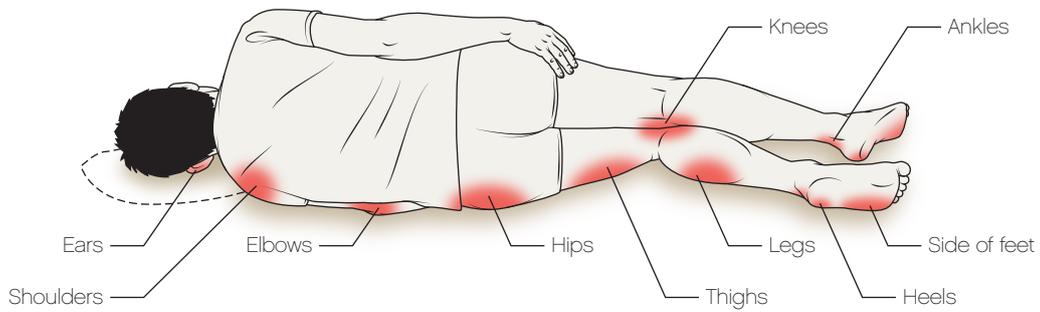
Seated slumped



Lying on back



Lying on side



Why should I check my skin?

- It helps you find any changes in the skin
- You can get help quickly, before things get worse

IMPORTANT: A pressure injury can happen quickly. It may not feel or look bad but it can hide more damage under the skin.

When to check

- Do it every day
- Before dressing or when taking your clothes off at night
- Keep checking your skin even if your skin looks and feels normal

IMPORTANT:

Check more often if you:

- are moving less or dragging more
- are sicker or have a fever
- have lost more feeling in your skin
- have wetter skin than normal

Where to check

- everywhere, even under stockings and splints
- bony areas such as heels, hips and the bones you sit on
- under tubes and parts of your body that are hard to see

How do I check my skin?

- Make sure the room is bright enough for you to see all your skin well
- Use a torch or light. The torch on your phone may be handy
- A mirror will help you see hard to get to parts of your body

- It may be easier to check your skin while lying or sitting on the bed
- Always check the same part on the other side of your body to see if there are differences
- If you cannot check all of your skin ask someone to help

What am I checking for?

Know what your skin FEELS and LOOKS like normally. FEEL any parts of your body that are:

- painful or sore
- itchy
- hot or cool
- hard or spongy/softer than normal

If you do not have normal feeling in parts of your body:

- notice if you have new pain in a part that normally has no feeling
- FEEL the areas with your hands
- focus more on how your skin LOOKS

LOOK to see if the parts on your body are:

- a different colour such as red, purple, blue, black, brown or a mix of these
- swollen
- blistered
- broken
- shiny

If you are a person with dark skin:

- it may be hard for you to SEE colour changes in your skin
- focus more on LOOKING and FEELING for all the other changes

What do I do if my skin LOOKS or FEELS different from normal?

Remember: The damage may be starting NOW.

- Get help NOW. Speak to a nurse, doctor, occupational therapist, podiatrist or physiotherapist

In the meantime:

- Do not lie or sit on that part of the skin. KEEP OFF IT
- Do not put weight or pressure on that part of the skin
- Make sure you do not drag that part of the skin
- Take a picture. Use this to compare to your normal skin
- Or draw what you see.
- Write down the date and time you found it
- Write down why you think it may have happened
- Check the rest of your skin more often
- Show the photo or drawing to a nurse, doctor, occupational therapist, podiatrist or physiotherapist

Tips to remember

- **You do not need a break in your skin for there to be damage**
- **Check your skin at least once a day**
- **If you find changes in your skin, GET OFF IT and get help quickly**
- **Finding changes early means:**
 - you may stop the damage from happening
 - if there is damage already there you may stop it getting worse

References

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Disclaimer

This health care guide is part of the 'Connected Wound Care' program, which provides important information about wound care. All care has been taken to ensure information is current and best-practice, however always consult your healthcare professional if you have any concerns or queries.

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