



DHMH

Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene
Office of Health Care Quality

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Martin O'Malley, Governor – Anthony G. Brown, Lt. Governor – John M. Colmers, Secretary

TO: Maryland Licensed Health Care Facilities and Providers

FROM: Wendy Kronmiller, Director, OHCQ

RE: Prevention of Pressure Ulcers

Date: December 15, 2008

Maryland is ranked 8th in the nation for incidences of pressure ulcers in nursing facilities. Each year, pressure ulcers affect more than 1 million patients and residents in nursing homes and hospitals nationwide. The human toll of pain, depression, altered self-image, infection and increased mortality caused by pressure ulcers is immeasurable. Costs associated with pressure ulcer treatment exceed \$1.3 billion annually.

We are asking that your facility participate in efforts to decrease the incidences of avoidable pressure ulcers in Maryland by providing information to your customers regarding the prevention of pressure ulcers. We believe that increasing patients', residents' and family members' awareness of the importance of protecting their skin, especially during periods of decreased mobility, is an essential part in addressing the incidence of pressure ulcers in Maryland.

As a part of this effort, the enclosed brochure is provided. This brochure can be printed/downloaded from our web site, www.dhmh.state.md.us/ohcq. The brochure may be adapted to provide your agency's logo and contact information as you would like. You may also request copies, as enclosed, from our office by e-mailing your request to ohcqweb@dhmh.state.md.us.

If you would like consultation from our office regarding additional resources to address decreasing pressure ulcers in the population you serve, please e-mail us at the above address.

Key Steps to prevention (cont)

Keep your skin safe from moisture (wetness):

- Use pads that pull moisture away from your body.
- Use a cream or ointment to protect your skin from urine and/or stool.
- Reapply each time your skin is cleansed after a bowel movement.

If you stay in bed for a long time:

- Talk to your nurse about getting a special mattress.
- Try to keep the head of your bed as low as possible (unless you cannot because of medical problems).
- Use pillows or foam wedges to keep your knees and ankles from touching each other.
- Do not lie right on your hip bone while lying on your side. Pillows may help to spread your body weight and pressure more evenly.



If you:

- Are bedridden or use a wheelchair
- Are unable to change your position for long periods of time
- Have loss of urine and/or stool control
- Do not eat or drink enough...

Then *you* are at Risk for developing a Pressure Ulcer

This brochure is provided by
the Office of Health Care Quality

Additional copies can be obtained by visiting our
website at www.dhmd.state.md.us/ohcq

Help Us Protect...



Your Skin

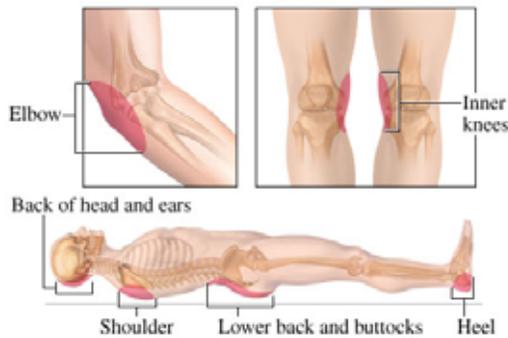
Informing you and your family
about *pressure ulcers* and how to
reduce your risk of getting them.



What is a pressure ulcer?

A pressure ulcer, sometimes called a “bedsore,” is when the skin and tissue below it gets hurt. This is usually caused by constant pressure.

They commonly form where your bones are close to your skin, such as your ankles, elbows, back, heels and hips. They start as red areas, but can hurt skin and muscles if not treated quickly.



Pressure ulcers are serious and may lead to:

- Pain
- Longer healing time from health problems
- Infection

What causes a pressure ulcer?

Pressure ulcers are areas of damaged skin caused by staying in one position for too long. The pressure squeezes tiny blood vessels that give nutrients and oxygen to the skin. When the skin does not get the nutrients and oxygen for a long period, the tissue dies and a pressure ulcer forms.

Sliding down in a bed or chair or even a slight rubbing on the skin can also cause pressure ulcers. This stretches blood vessels, causing pressure ulcers.

You can help reduce your risk by:

- Keeping your skin clean and dry
- Changing your position every two hours
- Using pillows, a special mattress or chair cushion to reduce pressure
- Talking to your health care team about your care.
- Getting involved with your turning schedule
- Involving your Family.
- Eating adequate and nutritious foods.

Key steps to prevention

Prevention of pressure ulcers is key because treatment can be difficult.

Protect your skin from injury

Limit pressure

- If you are in bed, your position should be changed at least every two hours.
- If you are in a chair, your position should be changed at least every hour. If you are able to shift your own position, you should do so every 15 minutes while sitting.

Reduce rubbing against your skin

- When moving in your bed, do not pull or drag yourself across the sheets. Also do not push or pull with your heels.
- Avoid repeated movements such as rubbing your foot on the sheets to scratch an itchy spot.
- Avoid the use of doughnut-shaped cushions – they can actually hurt your skin.

Take care of your skin

- Have your skin checked at least once a day.
- Prevent dry skin by using a cream/ointment.
- If you notice any abnormal areas, notify your nurse as soon as possible.