

PRESSURE CARE HELP SHEET

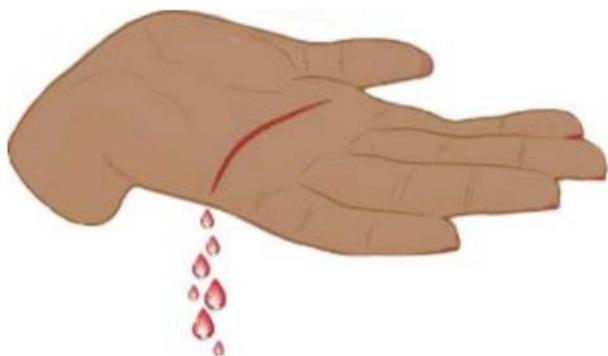
This Help Sheet explains what pressure sores are and what causes them; ways people with MJD, their families and carers can prevent pressure sores; and who can help if you think someone has a pressure sore.

Introduction

When people are sick, old or they are not able to move their bodies well there are some things that we need to be careful of to keep them healthy. One of those things is pressure sores and because they can happen on private parts of the body, Aboriginal people should read this information with the right person - someone they can talk to about women's or men's business.

What is a pressure sore?

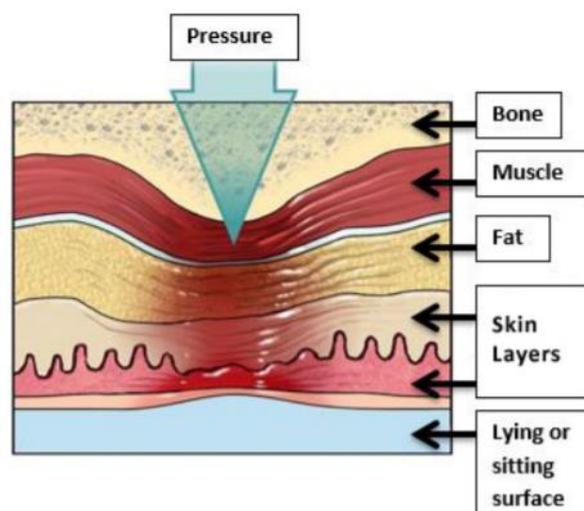
A pressure sore is different to a cut or a scratch. A cut or scratch happens when something breaks your skin from the outside of your body.



A pressure sore starts from the inside of the body from the bone out towards the skin. A sore like this happens when your muscle is squashed between a bone inside your body and what you are sitting or lying on – the ground or chair or bed.

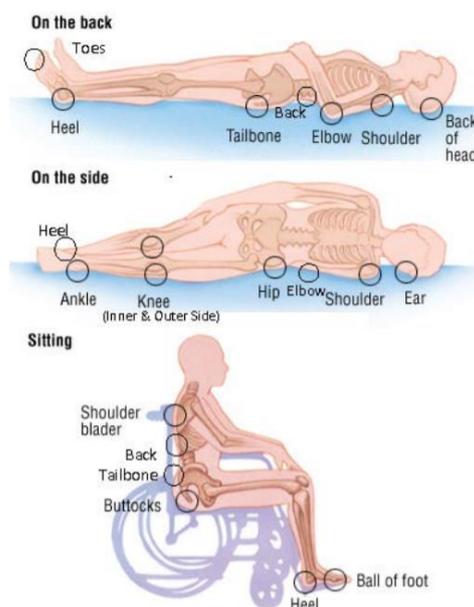
This is because the bone and ground put pressure on (squash) the muscle and stops blood getting to it. This makes that part of the muscle under your skin die. This means that by the time you can see the sore from the outside, it is already bad and a lot of muscle has already died. When you see a pressure sore on the skin it might look like a bruise or a dark coloured purple or red area on the

skin. It might hurt or might only feel a bit tingly, or you might not feel it at all.



Where can you get a pressure sore?

Pressure sores can happen on any part of your body that is bony. Like on really skinny people who you can see have pointy ankles or skinny hips and knees. The most common places to get a pressure sore are on the elbows, shoulders, heels, toes, ankles, knees, hips and bottom.



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How do you get a pressure sore?

There are 4 main things health workers talk about that cause pressure sores:

Pressure – sitting or lying in the same position for too long.

Like when you sit on the ground playing cards for a long time and your body gets heavy on your bottom.

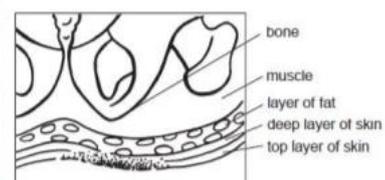
Friction – rubbing on the skin, like when you cross your legs sitting on the ground and your ankles rub on the concrete or dirt.



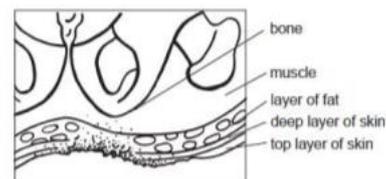
How do pressure sores get worse?

Pressure sores get worse in stages. A health worker might say “you have a stage 1 pressure sore”, this means:

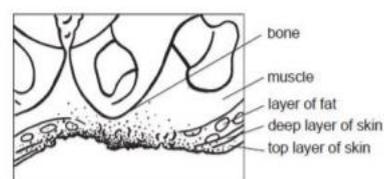
Stage 1 – the skin looks sick but is not broken



At stage 2 – there is an open graze on the skin or maybe a blister



At stage 3 – there is a deep sore on the skin



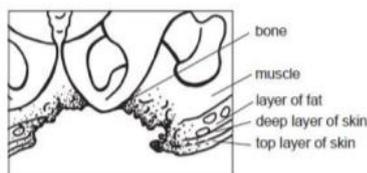
Shear – dragging or slipping, like when someone sits slumped in a chair and their family tries to drag them up to help them sit up straight

Moisture – sweating and problems with going to the toilet might make the skin wet and soft, like when a band aid or Kimbi is left on too long

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At stage 4 – the sore is very deep.

You might be able to see the flesh or bone or the sore might be dark and you can't see how deep the sore is inside (sometimes Health Workers call this “deep tissue injury”).



How to prevent pressure sores

1. Move around regularly

People who have trouble moving by themselves or are old or sick and in a wheelchair can easily get pressure sores.

These people need to be careful because they are different to young healthy people who can get up and move around easily.

The young healthy people can help the old and sick people to move and feel more comfortable so they don't get sores. They need to move every couple of hours so that they are lying or sitting on a different part of their body. If you are sitting together talking, ask if they feel uncomfortable or want to sit in a different way. You could say “You've been sitting a long time maybe you should stand up or lay down”.

There are special ways to help someone in a wheelchair to move so they don't get sores from dragging (shear). Carers or family can help them lean to the side or forward or even get out of their wheelchair to walk along the rails if they have been shown how to do it safely.



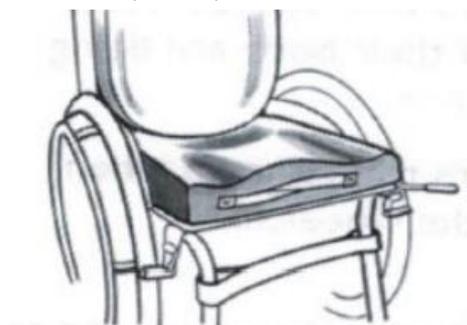
Some wheelchair users may hook their arm over the push handle for support.



Carers need to be careful too so they don't hurt themselves, like getting pain in their back from lifting someone up.

2. Sit on a cushion

There are special cushions for people to sit on in their wheelchair. They might be filled with air or soft gel which protects the person's skin from pressure. Sometimes people think this is the same as sitting on a pillow. This is not true, a pillow that you sleep on is not the same as these special cushions because it gets squashed very quickly under the person's weight. You shouldn't change the special cushion for a pillow if it needs cleaning. The person should have a spare cushion or spare cover to use instead. People should never sit on their wheelchair without any cushion because pressure sores can happen very quickly from the seat.



3. Don't leave hoist slings under people

If a carer or family needs help to move someone and have been shown how to use a hoist they should be careful when pulling the sling out because dragging the sling out might cause shear.

Never leave the sling under the person after you finished moving them. Also, when someone moves around, their clothes

can get caught up underneath their body. This puts more pressure on their skin. You can check that their skirt is straightened out.

4. Keep skin dry

Sometimes people who are old or sick have trouble getting to the toilet on time. They might accidentally do a wee or a

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poo in their clothes or Kimbi. If this happens don't make them feel shame, try to change their clothes or Kimbi as soon as you can. If someone gets very sweaty they should change their clothes too. Be careful not to drag the clothes off, wet clothes make skin very soft and it is easily broken.

5. Use moisturiser

Using moisturiser or special creams that keep skin clean and protect it from sweat, wee and poo might also be good for some people to use every day or with each Kimbi change. Some moisturisers can hurt the skin or make Kimbi's not work as good. So it's important to ask the clinic for help to choose the right one.

Why do we want to prevent pressure sores?

We need to learn about preventing pressure sores because they take a very long time to heal and can stop people doing the things they like to do. If the sore gets very bad people can get very sick and they might not get better.

There is a lady with MJD living in Darwin who can't walk anymore because of her sickness. She uses a wheelchair every day. She is a very skinny lady and got a pressure sore on her bottom. To help the sore get better, she could only sit in her wheelchair for a short time each day. This was not long enough for her to do things she likes doing like going shopping. This lady spent a long time in bed and got very lonely and bored until the sore healed.

How can carers/family find out if a person has a pressure sore?

If you help someone to look after themselves ask them if they have any pain on their skin when they sit down or lie on the bed or ground. It is good to check skin every day and see if there are any bruises or sores. Sometimes a person may need help to look at their skin especially if they can't move very well. You might be able to do this when you are helping them to have a shower or ask the people at aged care or the clinic to look.

What else can people do to help themselves?

Having diabetes or smoking can make someone more likely to get a pressure sore and it will take a longer time to heal. If you have diabetes this affects how blood moves around your body. The blood gets slow so you need to be more careful about checking your skin and making sure you do what the clinic tells you to manage the diabetes. Smoking also affects the way blood moves in your body. If you stop smoking your blood will move around your body better which will help prevent sores or help them get better more quickly. You can talk to someone at the clinic if you want help to stop smoking. Staying healthy and strong is important too. Make sure you eat good food and drink lots of water. Moving about is important. Make sure you exercise if you have been shown how to do this safely. Carers or family can help people who can't walk anymore exercise in their wheelchair or in bed.

Who else can help?

If you are worried that you or someone in your family might have a pressure sore, tell the clinic or someone you trust. A doctor, nurse, Aboriginal Health Worker or aged care staff can look for sores and help it to get better. If you or someone in your family does get a bad sore, the nurse might have to put medicine cream and bandages on it and they will tell the person not to sit or lie on the sore until it is better. Even with expert care pressure sores can still happen. Don't feel bad if you or someone you are caring for gets a pressure sore. By reading this information you are already learning skills to help you do the best you can!

Who can I talk to if I have questions or concerns?

MJD Foundation staff

Libby Massey 0417 279 120

Simone McGrath 0407 594 056

Your Health clinic doctors, nurses and health workers.