

How to prevent bed sores

A bed sore is an area of skin that has been damaged due to pressure or rubbing. They are often found on bony parts of the body. Following these instructions will help you to avoid or manage these conditions.

Looking after your skin

- Check your skin daily.
- Look for red/purple or blue skin, hard, warm or shiny areas, blisters or swelling, dryness or dry patches, cracks, calluses or wrinkles.
- Ask for advice from your palliative care nurse if any of the above signs are found.
- Try to keep your skin clean and dry.
- Use a moisturising lotion to prevent your skin from drying out.
- Wash with warm water and a mild soap.
- Avoid massaging your skin over bony parts of the body.
- Keep toenails trimmed with no sharp edges.
- Wear comfortable shoes and socks or stockings.
- Eating a balanced diet can also help your skin.

When in bed

- Make sure that your bed is clean and comfortable.
- Try to minimise folds or wrinkles in the sheets.
- A special type of mattress may be suitable for you. Contact your palliative care nurse for advice.
- If possible, change your position every half hour unless advised by your nurse.
- Being tilted slightly to the side and supported with pillows is often a good position.
- Bending the knees a little with a pillow in between the knees and ankles may also assist with comfort and bed sores.
- If sitting up in bed, only sit in this position for half an hour, unless advised by a health professional.
- Wear loose, long-sleeved clothing and socks in bed.



Further information

Contact your nurse if you require further assistance. For example, some health services have special wound care nurses that may help. www.caresearch.com.au

Australian Wound Management Association www.awma.com.au

When sitting in a chair

- If possible, sit up straight with your back well supported.
- Support your feet so that your knees are level with your hips.
- Lift your bottom (with help if needed) every 15 minutes for 15 seconds. Do this by pushing up off the chair using the armrests.
- Try not to lean to one side for any length of time.
- Lie down to rest during the day – this will give your bottom a break from the pressure.
- Please report any change in condition to your nurse or doctor.

Special note to carers

- As the person's condition changes during the last days or hours of life, only move your loved one if they are obviously uncomfortable. This can be seen in facial grimacing, frowning, tensing of muscles and agitation.



Loddon Mallee Regional Palliative Care Consortium

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