

## Decubitus prevention

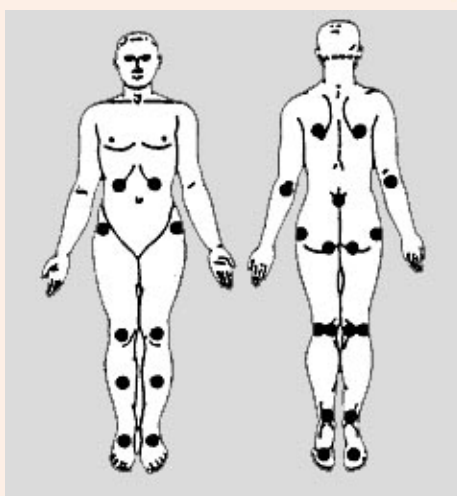
# How can bedsores be prevented

### DECUBITUS

This is the medical term for “bedsores” or “pressure ulcers” as a result of lying down or sitting. It affects people who are bedridden and immobile. They spend a prolonged period of time lying in bed or sitting in a chair or wheelchair.

### CAUSE OF DECUBITUS

Damage to the skin due to long term pressure and and/or friction. The skin and the underlying tissue is compressed. This deprives the tissue of oxygen and tissue death can occur. Vulnerable areas are:



### HOW CAN ONE RECOGNISE DECUBITUS

Decubitus starts with pain and redness of the skin in places where there is little tissue between skin and bone. The heels, the tail bone and the elbows are especially vulnerable. Wounds can occur here that heal with difficulty.

### HOW CAN ONE PREVENT DECUBITUS:



#### **Changing position and posture**





You can prevent decubitus by changing your position and changing your posture. If you are confined to your bed, change your posture at least once every four hours. For example by lying on your back, then either partially or completely on your side, partially or completely on your stomach, and then sitting up or lying flat again. Use the knee support on the bed to prevent you from slumping, or use a pillow under the lower parts of your legs to relieve the pressure on your heels. Please do not hesitate to ask your nurse for help/advice. Sometimes it is necessary to use a special anti-decubitus mattress.

#### **Friction**

Friction can be prevented by sliding as little as possible in bed or on a chair. When moving your arms or legs or trying to sit up, do not slide over the sheets but lift yourself as much as you possibly can so that the skin is free from the surface. You may have to ask a nurse for help. Wearing cotton towelling socks without a seam in bed can minimise some of the sliding forces.

POSITIONS IN BED AND ON A CHAIR

Correct positions:	
 <p>Lower body at the same angle as the upper body to prevent sliding forces</p>	 <p>The weight is spread out over the sitting area, the feet, arms and back</p>

Incorrect positions:			
 <p>There are sliding forces on the tail bone and the heels when sitting half up in bed</p>	 <p>By placing a pillow in your back, you start slumping, as a result your tail bone and buttocks are subject to sliding forces and more pressure is put on the upper legs</p>	 <p>Foot supports that are too low do not enable the feet to carry any weight and the buttocks and the tail bone are subject to larger sliding forces</p>	 <p>Foot supports that are too high place too much weight and pressure on the buttocks</p>

**Skin care**

Clean the skin with a PH neutral soap which is non defatting. Wash gently. Protect the skin by using a PH neutral cream or lotion. For people who suffer from urine loss it is important to keep the skin clean and dry and to use the correct incontinence products.

**Smooth under layer**

Make sure you have a smooth, clean and dry under layer to sit or lie on. This also applies to clothes. That means: try to avoid creases and, for example, bread crumbs in-between the sheets and in your clothes or on your chair.

**Food**

Try to eat nutritious and varied meal. Drink sufficient fluids, at least 1 ½ litres per day. This is good for the condition of the skin. Ask your dietitian, doctor or nurse for advice.

**The wound/decubitus nurse**

It is important that you keep an eye on the positions that increase your chances of decubitus. Within the hospital there is a wound/decubitus nurse who can be called if there is an increased chance of decubitus or if decubitus has occurred.