

Preventing Pressure Injuries (Bedsore) in the ICU

Protecting your loved one

This handout explains what the care team in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) will do to protect your loved one from getting pressure injuries.

What are pressure injuries?

Pressure injuries are often called “bedsores.” They are skin sores that form when muscles and the soft tissues of your body are squeezed against an outside surface, such as a chair or bed.

Pressure injuries occur most often over bony places, such as the heels, tailbone, elbows, and the back of the head (see drawing below).

Patients in the ICU are at high risk for getting pressure injuries. This is because they are very ill and often cannot change their position in bed.

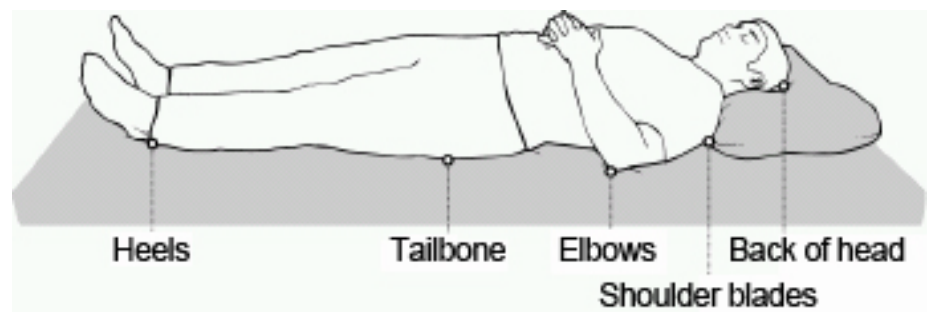
Why is it important to prevent pressure injuries?

Pressure injuries increase the risk for infection. An infection makes a patient’s health even worse.

Please ask your nurse what you can do to help prevent pressure injuries.

What does the ICU do to prevent these injuries?

In the ICU, we do our best to keep patients from getting pressure injuries. The entire care team works together to help prevent these injuries.



Pressure injuries are mostly likely to form where the patient’s bony areas touch the bed.



A special *sacral dressing* may be placed over the patient's tailbone (sacrum) to help prevent pressure injuries.

Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns. UWMC staff are available to help.

You may also call the Wound Consult Line, 206.598.4532.

5-East Intensive Care Unit:
206.598.4545

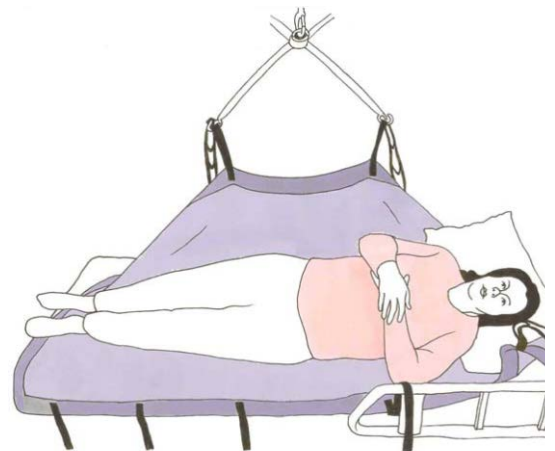
5-SA Intensive Care Unit:
206.597.3500

5-Southeast Intensive Care Unit:
206.598.6500

6-SA Intensive Care Unit:
206.597.3600

To help prevent pressure injuries:

- When your loved one is admitted to the ICU, a nurse will do a full skin check. After this, a nurse will check your loved one's skin at least once every shift.
- If a nurse finds any pressure injuries, the nurse will tell the care team. Treatment will begin.
- All ICU beds have a special mattress that helps protect the patient's skin.
- If needed, a special *sacral dressing* may be placed over the patient's tailbone, near the bottom of their spine.
- The patient's heels are kept off the bed. Patients may wear special boots, or their feet may be propped on pillows.
- If needed, patients receive a special pillow for their head.
- We turn patients often to ease pressure on their skin. If you have questions or concerns about this turning, please ask your loved one's nurse.
- If needed, patients are turned using the overhead (ceiling) lift.
- The ICU Skin Team may assess a patient to make sure everything is being done to prevent pressure injuries.
- Your loved one will receive good nutrition and plenty of fluids. These are important for preventing and healing pressure injuries.



A ceiling lift may be used for turning.

Prevention Is Key

We will do all we can to keep your loved one from getting pressure injuries. We thank you for your support as we take care of your loved one.

If you have questions, or would like to talk about how we prevent pressure injuries in the ICU, please call the Wound Consult Line at 206.598.4532.