**Prevention Is Key**

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

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

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

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**Questions?**

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

You may also call the Wound Consult Line at 206.598.4532.

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**At University of Washington Medical Center (UWMC), we do our best to keep patients from getting pressure ulcers (bedsores). This handout explains what the healthcare providers in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) will do to protect your loved one from getting these skin injuries.**
**What are pressure ulcers?**
Pressure ulcers are skin injuries. They are often called “bedsores.”

Pressure ulcers occur most often over bony places in the body, such as the heels, tailbone, elbows, and the back of the head.

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

**Why is it important to prevent pressure ulcers?**
UWMC takes preventing pressure ulcers very seriously. This is because:

- Pressure ulcers increase the risk for infection, and an infection would make a patient’s poor health even worse.
- Patients in the ICU are at high risk for developing pressure ulcers. This is because they are very ill and may not be able to change their position in bed.

At UWMC, all healthcare providers help prevent pressure ulcers.

**What does the ICU do to prevent pressure ulcers?**
- When your loved one is admitted to the ICU, a nurse will do a thorough skin check for pressure ulcers. After this, a nurse will check your loved one’s skin at least once every shift.
- If pressure ulcers are found, the nurse will tell the care team. Treatment will begin.
- All ICU beds have a special mattress that helps protect the patient’s skin.
- Patients are turned often to relieve pressure. If you have questions or concerns about this turning, please ask your loved one’s nurse.
- If needed, a special [*sacral dressing*](https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/skin-ulcer/symptom-20370953) may be placed over the patient’s tailbone, near the bottom of their spine.

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

- The patient’s heels are kept off the bed. Patients either wear special boots or their feet are propped on pillows.
- If needed, patients receive a special pillow for their head.
- If needed, patients are turned using the overhead lift.

*A ceiling lift may be used for turning.*

**What does the ICU do to prevent pressure ulcers?**
Patients may be assessed by the ICU Skin Team to make sure everything is being done to prevent pressure ulcers.

Your loved one will receive good nutrition and plenty of fluids. These are important for preventing and healing pressure ulcers.