



*Canadian  
Paraplegic  
Association  
(N.B.) Inc.*

*Association  
canadiennes des  
paraplégiques  
(N.-B.) Inc.*

**Are you at risk?**

**How to prevent and care for**

# **pressure sores**



In partnership with:

**Lawtons**  
Home HealthCare

## What is a pressure sore?

A pressure sore is an area of injured or broken skin or tissue caused by too much pressure or too much pressure and moisture on your skin. If pressure sores are not treated properly, they may get infected. An infection in a pressure sore can be serious – prevention and proper care are key.

## Who is at risk for pressure sores?

If your level of mobility is decreased by illness, injury, age, or sedation — even for a brief time — you may be at risk. Poor nutrition, unplanned weight loss, difficulty feeling or reporting pain, and loss of bladder and bowel use can also put you at risk.

## What should I look for?

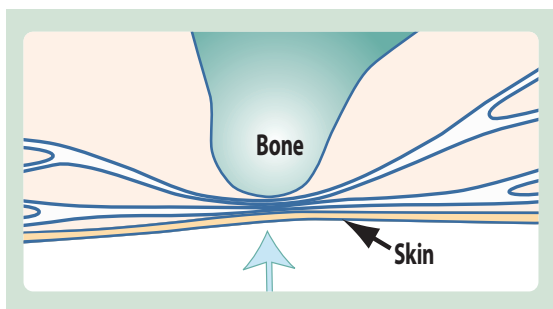
- Redness over a bony part of the body.
- Broken skin or red, blue, or dark purple coloured patches on skin.
- A bad smell or thick yellow or green pus from the sore.
- Swelling, warmth or coolness around the sore.
- A spongy or raised area around the sore.
- Tenderness or pain around the sore.

## How can I prevent pressure sores?

- **Use the 30/30 rule.** Shift your weight/position every 30 minutes for 30 seconds, and at least once every 2 hours during the night. Do wheelchair pushups – use the 30/30 rule. If you can't lift yourself, shift your weight to another part of your body. Lean forward and rest on your lap or a table for 30 seconds or lean to the side.
- **Make a shifting/turning schedule and stick to it.** If you need help to move, ask!
- **Use a foam pad or pillow:**
  - between knees & heels to keep them from rubbing together
  - under your calves (not your heel!) to keep heels raised off the bed
- **Take special care when you transfer.** Don't drag your bottom as it could shear your skin. Position well in the wheelchair after each transfer. Use a seatbelt to help avoid sliding. If you have a tilt option in your chair, use it often and change positions throughout the day.

### Did you know...

Anyone who sits or lies in one position for a long time may get pressure sores. A pressure sore may also be called pressure ulcer, skin sore, bed sore or decubitus sore.



## How can I protect my skin?

- Check your skin daily.
- Use a mirror or have someone else check the hard to see areas.
- Keep skin clean and moisturized.
- Use warm bath water.
- After your bath/shower dry your skin off well.
- Avoid extreme (hot or cold) temperatures.
- Take care of your feet! Wash & dry feet carefully. Clip toe nails every two weeks.
- Don't stay in the sun long. Apply sun block often; cover body parts that have no/little feeling.
- Protect skin from too much moisture (e.g., sweat, urine).
- Check your cushion each time you get into your wheelchair. If your cushion is removed, make sure it is put back the right way.
- Avoid tight clothing (especially jeans) with seams, buttons or wrinkles that put pressure on your skin, such as under your bottom.
- Avoid smoking. Smoking makes it hard for oxygen to get to skin and prevents it from healing.

### **Eat well & keep hydrated.**

- Eat a well-balanced diet. Foods high in protein, vitamins & minerals help skin heal quicker.
- Drink 8 to 10 glasses of water per day and limit caffeine & alcohol drinks.
- If you have trouble with swallowing/eating, talk to a nutrition expert about a nutrition plan.

### **Be active!**

- If you can move, move! The more active you can be, the lower your risk of pressure sores.
- Try to plan some time each day to do some activity—at whatever level you can.

## Get the right products.

- Ask your Occupational Therapist, Doctor or other healthcare provider.
- Products that may help are:
  - foam/air beds
  - bed/chair moisture protectors
  - foam wedges/pads/cushions
  - cushion gloves for wheeling
  - continence aids
- Good seating helps! Seat cushions must fit your body and your wheelchair.

## How do I take care of pressure sores?

- Take pressure off the sore right away.
- Contact your doctor right away if you notice any broken skin or open sores.
- Talk to your health care provider about how to clean, dress, & bandage sores in early stages at home.
- After it heals, follow prevention tips as skin is more likely to get re-injured. A healthcare provider can help you set a schedule to return back to your activities.

## Get immediate medical care if:

- sores are getting worse
- you have signs of infection or fever
- drainage from the sore or a strong odor
- increased heat or redness around the sore

### **Prevention is Key!**

Relieve pressure

Shift your weight often

Use the "30/30 Rule"

Protect your skin

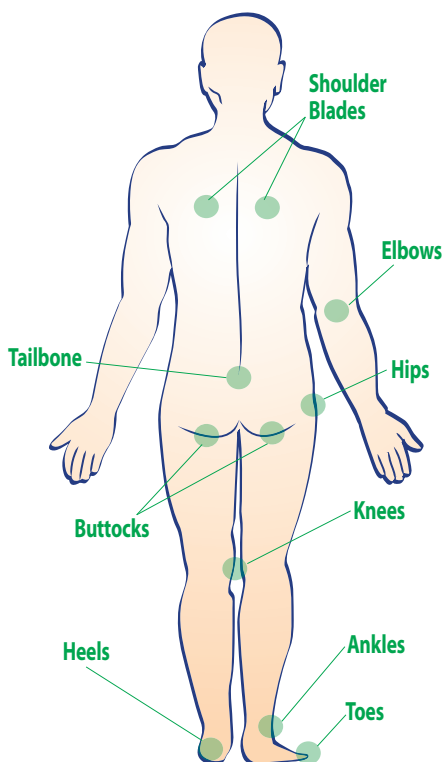
Eat well

Keep hydrated

Be active

Get the right support products

## Where do pressure sores form?



**Canadian Paraplegic Association (N.B.) Inc.**

**440 Wilsey Road, Suite 102**

**Fredericton, NB E3B 7G5**

**Tel. (506) 462-9555 or 1-866-462-9555**

**[www.cpanb.ca](http://www.cpanb.ca)**

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