When someone is very ill and spends a lot of their time in bed, they are at risk of developing pressure sores or “bed sores” from lack of movement and therefore persistent pressure on certain areas. These are sores that often develop on the “bony areas” of the body as they lie against the bed. Once they are there, they are very difficult to treat to get better, so it is VERY important to do what you can to prevent them starting.

COMMON AREAS AFFECTED

- Heels
- Elbows
- Sacral area (bottom)
- Lower Back
- Hips
- Ears (if lying on their side mostly)

HOW TO PREVENT BEDSORES

1. Make sure the patient is turning regularly. Every 2-4 hours they need to change position. Turn them from their back onto their side and then keep rotating between the back and their sides.

2. When changing the patient’s position, use some cream (non-fragranced) such as: prep or aqueous cream to rub the back, hips, legs and heels.

3. When doing the morning wash, use circular motions to wash the body, back, arms and legs to improve the circulation in the body.

4. For the heels, elevate the feet off the bed by putting a pillow or soft blanket underneath the feet, let the heels hang off the end of the pillow, so they are not touching the bed or the pillow.

5. Ask them to bend their arms and legs and rotate their wrists and ankles as much as they are able. If they cannot do it themselves, you can gently do it for them from time to time when in the room.

6. Encourage the patient to move their legs, arms and feet by themselves if they can. These are called passive exercises and can be done in bed.

7. Make sure when changing the linen that there are no wrinkles, as wrinkles will push against the skin and cause the skin to breakdown.

8. When moving/turning the patient, the easiest way is to use a draw-sheet under their bottom to slide it out or use a draw-sheet created using a big towel, blanket or single sheet. It must be folded into a rectangle shape and must fit from above the patient’s shoulders to underneath their bottom, including the back of their upper thigh.

9. This sheet is placed under the patient and can then be used to pull the patient up in bed or roll them onto their back. When moving the patient, you will pull on the sheet and not on the patient’s skin. The draw-sheet also prevents your back from being injured when trying to move a patient.

10. If you are on your own, you will stand behind the head of the bed and hold the sheet on both sides and move the patient up the bed.

1. If there are two of you one can stand each side of the bed and hold the sheet at the top and bottom ends and move the patient up the bed (one...two...three...move).

2. If you want to roll the patient to the side from their back or opposite side, you will put a pillow or soft blanket underneath the feet, let the heels hang off the end of the pillow, so they are not touching the bed or the pillow.

3. Once on their side, you can move around the bed to the other side, where their back is now facing you and gently slide your hands underneath the patient to pull it back slightly so they are comfortable, you can then put a pillow behind their back to prevent them from rolling back on their backs.

4. When a patient is lying on their side ensure you put a pillow or soft blanket (folded up) between their legs to prevent the heels from pushing against each other and developing sores.

5. A pillow can be placed underneath the calves of the legs to lift the heels off the bed, reducing pressure.

If the patient develops bed sores contact your home care sister or clinic to get advice on how to dress the sores to promote healing.

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