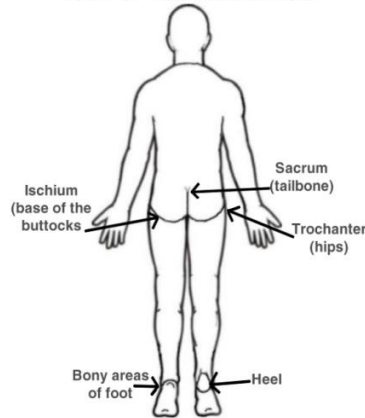


## Ways to prevent pressure sores

Check your skin completely twice a day, once in the morning and once at night.

- Carefully look for skin damage or redness, especially on bony areas.

Most common areas where pressure sores occur on individuals with SCI



\* The four most common areas for a pressure sore to develop in individuals are on the sacrum, or tailbone, the heel of the foot, the ischium, which is at the base of the buttocks and the bony areas of the foot. The trochanter or hip is another area at high risk for individuals who spend a lot of time in bed. (*See picture at left*).

\* Always **use proper equipment** when seated or lying down. Have a doctor or qualified professional recommend what specialized equipment you need to protect your skin.

- Your **seat cushion** needs to fit your body and your chair. It needs to be properly adjusted to offer the best protection against pressure areas.
- Your **mattress** needs to provide proper support and protection.
- Use **pillows** or **sheepskin** to help protect areas of the body that get too much pressure.

**Move often.** Sitting or lying in the same position for too long causes the flow of blood to be cut off. The skin or underlying tissue begins to die, and it results in a pressure sore.

**While in bed it is usually recommended that you change position at least every 2 hours.**

\* Keep skin clean and dry. Wet skin can become soft or inflamed and is less resistant to damage. Moisture weakens the skin and causes it to breakdown more quickly.

- Wash and dry skin right away after any bowel or bladder accident.
- Change clothes when they become wet.
- Use lotion instead of powder on your skin.

\* Eat a well balanced diet. Foods high in protein, vitamins and minerals help your skin stay healthy and heal more quickly.

\* Drink the recommended amount of fluids to help your skin stay soft.

- Drink plenty of water each day.
- Limit the number of caffeinated drinks like coffee, tea and soft drinks.

\* Protect your skin from harm.

- Avoid movement or activities that rub, scratch or cut your skin.
- Avoid clothes and shoes that are too loose or too tight fitting.
- Avoid clothes with thick seams, buttons or zippers located in areas where they put pressure on your skin.
- Take special caution when doing transfers and participating in new activities or sports.

\* Do not smoke. Smoking decreases oxygen to the skin and can make it more difficult for skin to heal.

\* Do not abuse drugs or alcohol. Both can damage your skin and can also lead to other health problems.

Friction and shear from movement can contribute to pressure ulcers.

- Dragging the heels on the bed or sliding the buttocks against the bed or chair can remove the first layer of skin.
- Shear happens when the deeper tissues are pulled and torn from these shifts as well.

When sliding up in bed, the feet should be placed flat and used to help push.

When sitting upright in bed, all of the pressure is on the buttocks. Sliding down can result in friction and shear that harms the skin.

**Do not** rub red areas on the skin, as this causes shearing of the tissues below the skin surface.

Some examples of positioning options

Side lying use pillows and/or wedges to help keep you on your side. Try to avoid rolling fully on to the hip as pressure can build up in that area.



Lying on your back with heel pressure relief

