

Pressure Sores- Prevention & Management

Prevention

PRESSURE RELIEF

Patient positioning- regular turning and repositioning schedule, typically, a two-hour interval is recommended.

- Patients should be placed at a 30 degree angle when lying on their side to avoid direct pressure over the hip bone or other bony prominences.
- Pillows or foam wedges should be placed between the ankles and knees to avoid pressure at these sites when patients have no mobility at these areas.
- The heels require particular attention; pillows may be placed under the lower legs to elevate the heels, or special heel protectors can be used. Heel protectors are available in Whelehans Pharmacy.
- The head of the bed should not be elevated more than 30 degrees to prevent sliding and friction injury.

Support surfaces (mattresses)

Types include:

- Non-powered support surfaces do not require electricity and consist of mattresses that are made of gel, foam, air, or water, or a combination of these. They work by distributing pressure over a wider body surface area.
- Overlays are support surfaces designed to be placed on top of another support surface. Foam, air, or water overlays may be used for patients who can assume a variety of positions without bearing weight on the ulcer.
- Powered or dynamic support surfaces require electricity to alternate air currents in order to regulate or redistribute pressure against the body. Examples include alternating pressure mattresses, low air loss beds, and air fluidized mattresses.

Donut cushions should not be used as they increase swelling and concentrate the pressure to surrounding tissue. Three main types of seat cushions include gel and foam seat cushions, non-powered adjustable cushions and powered adjustable seat cushions.

Minimise immobility

- Immobilised patients may benefit from physiotherapy.
- Severe spasticity may be relieved by muscle relaxant drugs (eg Lioresal® or nerve block).
- Medications contributing to immobility, such as sedatives should be stopped.

Skin care — Skin condition should be inspected daily.

- Skin assessment should include skin temperature, colour, moisture status, and integrity.
- Keeping the skin clean and dry, but avoiding excess dryness and scaling is important
- Skin cleansing should be done with mild cleansing agents that minimise irritation.
- Hot water should be avoided.
- Vigorous massage over bony prominences should be avoided.
- Cleansings should be done at regular intervals to minimise exposure to excess moisture due to incontinence, perspiration, or wound drainage.

Management

- Repositioning of the patient.
- Treatment of concurrent conditions which may delay healing. (e.g.) poor circulation
- Pressure relieving support surfaces such as beds, mattresses, overlays or cushions.
- Local wound management using modern or advanced wound dressings and other technologies.
- Patients with identified grade 1 pressure ulcers are at a significant risk of developing more severe ulcers and should receive interventions to prevent deterioration.

Pain relief

- Pain is often significant and disabling for those with pressure ulcers.
- Paracetamol may be sufficient, but patients often require stronger analgesia.
- Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs may increase peripheral oedema and are **inappropriate** for patients with pressure ulcers. (eg Ibuprofen, Diclofenac)
- Opioid analgesics may be needed for moderate to severe pain.
- Topical local anesthetics such as lidocaine can provide numbness for a short period of time and can be useful for a specific procedure
- Wound cleansing and dressing techniques may need to be reconsidered if they are causing severe pain. In particular, adequate pain control should be provided for dressing changes and debridement. Debridement is the removal of dead tissue and is generally done in hospital.
- Patients may require referral to a pain clinic.

Nutrition

If oral intake is not adequate to ensure sufficient calories, protein, vitamins, and minerals, nutritional supplementation is recommended. This is generally initiated by the patient's GP or a dietitian. Increased dietary protein intake promotes the healing of pressure ulcers. Cubitan® is an example of a high energy, high protein nutritional supplement with wound specific nutrients. It

increases wound healing times in under nourished patients.

Dressings

Professional consensus recommends that modern dressings (e.g.) hydrocolloids, hydrogels, foams, films, alginates, soft silicones) should be used in preference to basic dressing types, (e.g.) gauze, paraffin gauze and simple dressing pads.

Grade 1 ulcers may be dressed with transparent films for protection. (eg Tegaderm[®], Opsite. Grade 2 pressure ulcers usually require an occlusive or semi permeable dressing that will maintain a moist wound environment. (eg Comfeel Plus[®], Granuflex[®]

Ulcers with heavy exudate require an absorptive dressing to avoid build up of chronic wound fluid that can lead to wound maceration and inhibit healing. An appropriate wound dressing can remove excess wound exudate while maintaining a moist environment to accelerate wound healing. Dressings with absorptive qualities include **alginates** (eg Kaltostat[®], foams (eg Allevyn[®], Biatain[®], and **hydrocolloids** (eg Aquacel[®], Comfeel[®], Granuflex[®]).

Desiccated ulcers are dry ulcers that lack wound fluids which help promote healing. Thus, pressure ulcer healing is promoted by dressings that maintain a moist wound environment while keeping the surrounding intact skin dry. Choices for a dry wound include **hydrogels** (eg Granugel[®], Intrasite Gel[®] and **hydrocolloids** (eg Aquacel[®], Comfeel[®], Granuflex[®]).

Infection control

- Reduce risk of infection and enhance wound healing by hand washing, wound cleansing and debridement. Protect from external sources of contamination, e.g. faeces.
- If purulent material or foul odour is present, more frequent cleansing and possibly debridement are required.

More Information on Pressure Sores

You can get more comprehensive information on the subject in Whelehans.

Care of the Elderly

Whelehans blister pack medication for free. This can be a great aid in situations where patients need to take multiple long term medicines. Blister packs arrange the medication into easy to follow packs arranged into the different times of day. Whelehans also have a free prescription delivery service covering Westmeath where we will collect your prescription from your GP and deliver it to your home. Ring us at 04493 34591 to arrange your free blister pack and delivery.

Disclaimer: Please ensure you consult with your healthcare professional before making any changes recommended