

Wound Care Essentials: Quick Reference Nursing Guides

What is a Pressure Ulcer?

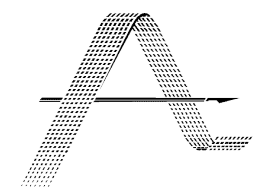
When unrelieved pressure causes damage to the skin and underlying structures, an ulceration can develop, known as a pressure ulcer. There are many factors that can contribute to the development of a pressure injury such as friction, shear, moisture, pressure, limited mobility, obesity, or other comorbidities. Pressure ulcers are classified into six categories—Stage I, Stage II, Stage III, Stage IV, Unstageable, and Deep Tissue Injury (DTI).

How do you identify it?

Pressure injuries tend to occur over bony prominences on the body such as the shoulders, elbows, hips, sacrum, buttocks, ankles, heels and toes. Pressure injuries can often be confused with many other similar-looking wounds and injuries, so a good history of the wound will help you determine the correct etiology.

How do you treat it?

The main goal in treating pressure ulcers are to relieve pressure and prevent deterioration. Proper positioning is key in relieving pressure over bony prominences. The utilization of pillows and heel protectors can also aid in alleviating pressure. Manage moisture (from incontinence or body sweat) and apply barrier cream to protect the intact skin. Encourage mobility and proper nutrition as tolerated or as physically possible for the patient. Educate all caregivers and family so that everyone can be an active participant in the prevention of pressure ulcers. The specifics of treatment vary from stage to stage, so be sure to consult with each of our Quick Reference Nursing Guides on each stage for more in-depth information and identifying and treating pressure ulcers.



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