

Reducing Pressure Ulcers

Why is reducing pressure ulcers important?

A pressure ulcer or bed sore is an injury to the skin caused by constant pressure over a bony area which reduces the blood supply to the area. Nursing home residents who cannot easily reposition themselves are often susceptible to this condition and need special care. Pressure ulcers can be dangerous and painful for a resident, in part because broken skin can allow infection into the body. If untreated, pressure ulcers can deepen and even expose the bone. Deeper ulcers may be hard to heal or may not heal at all. Sometimes, pressure ulcers can lead to death.

The presence of pressure ulcers limits the quality of life for a resident as evidenced by:

- Decrease in bowel and bladder function
- More incontinence
- Decrease in ability to move without help
- Decrease in mental capacity
- Increase in pain
- Increased risk for infection
- Less participation in activities

Proven techniques can reduce and almost eliminate this uncomfortable and potentially dangerous condition. Advancing Excellence believes that "Nursing home residents receive appropriate care to prevent and minimize pressure ulcers."

How can nursing assistants help reduce pressure ulcers?

- Read residents' care plans to learn who is at risk of developing pressure ulcers.
- Change the position of residents who are immobilized when in bed or when up in a chair.
- Provide frequent incontinence care. Remove urine and/or feces from the skin as soon as possible.
- Provide water to the resident frequently because well-hydrated skin will not break down easily.
- Check the resident's skin each time you provide care. Note and report redness -- especially over a bony area -- that does not disappear or a new open skin area.
- If the resident's care plan requires a dressing, make sure it is there.
- Note the resident's eating habits. Make sure they have nutritious meals. If residents aren't eating, notify the charge nurse.
- Look for opportunities to increase residents' mobility through activities and/or socialization.
- Observe residents for pain, and notify the charge nurse if a resident complains of pain or if you observe the signs of pain in non-communicative residents.
- Follow your nursing home's facility's protocols for pressure ulcer prevention and treatment.
- Participate in in-services related to pain.
- Talk to the charge nurse if you have a suggestion that you think might work better for a resident.
- Share what you learn and know with other staff.

Advancing Excellence in America's Nursing Homes is a national campaign to improve the quality of care and life for the country's 1.5 million people receiving care in nursing homes. Find out if your nursing home is part of the Advancing Excellence Campaign. To sign up or get more information, go to www.nhqualitycampaign.org.



Pressure Ulcer Resources

Campaign Resources:

- Webinar: Reducing Pressure Ulcers in Nursing Homes: An Interdisciplinary Process Framework <http://www.nhqualitycampaign.org>
- Video: Pressure Ulcers: Best Practices <http://www.nhqualitycampaign.org>
- Implementing Change in Long-Term Care <http://www.nhqualitycampaign.org>
- Campaign Goals and Objectives <http://www.nhqualitycampaign.org>
- Top 10 Ideas to Involve All Staff in Advancing Excellence <http://www.nhqualitycampaign.org>

Best Practice Resources:

- Preventing Pressure Ulcers: *Evidence-based clinical practice guidelines that offer the latest in the management of pressure ulcers emphasize an interdisciplinary team approach* <http://www.ahcancal.org/News/publication/Provider/CaregivingAug2008.pdf>
- Pressure Ulcer Plan Is Working <http://www.ahcancal.org/News/publication/Provider/CaregivingMay2008.pdf>

Lessons Learned Resources:

- Getting A Jump On Wound Care: *A wound care education program that empowers nurses and CNAs is able to control pressure ulcers at a Colorado state veterans facility* <http://www.providermagazine.com/pdf/2007/caregiving-01-2007.pdf>

Links to Relevant Organizations:

- National Association of Health Care Assistants <http://www.nahcacaes.org>
- National Network of Career Nursing Assistants <http://www.cna-network.org>
- Nursing Assistant Resources On The Web <http://nursingassistants.net>
- American Association for Homes and Services for the Aged <http://www.aahsa.org/>
- American Health Care Association <http://www.ahcancal.org/>
- National Long Term Care Ombudsman Resource Center <http://www.ltombudsman.org/>