

# Caregiver Assistance News

“CARING FOR YOU... CARING FOR OTHERS”

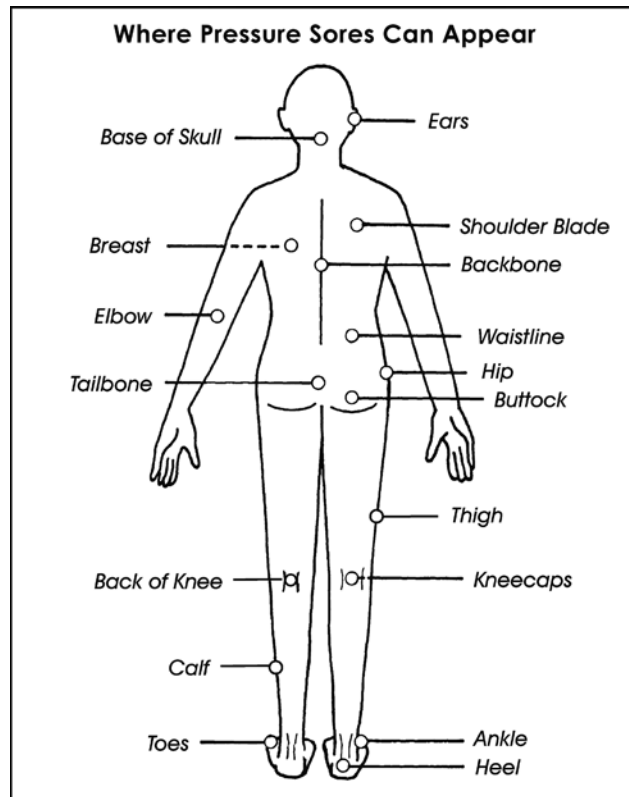
## Skin Care – Recognizing Changes

Pressure sores (also called decubiti, or bedsores) are blisters or breaks in the skin. They are caused when the body’s weight presses blood out of a certain area. How much time they take to heal depends on how advanced they are. **The best treatment of pressure sores is prevention.**

- The most common areas for sores are the bony areas—tailbone, hips, heels, and elbows.
- Sores can appear when the skin keeps rubbing on a sheet.
- The skin breakdown starts from the inside, works up to the surface, and **can happen in as little as 15 minutes.**
- Damage can range from a change in color in unbroken skin to deep wounds down to the muscle or bone.
- *For people with light skin*, in the first stage of a bedsore, the skin color may change to dark purple or red and does not turn pale under fingertip pressure. *For people with dark skin*, this area may become darker than normal.
- The affected area may feel warmer than the skin around it.
- Pressure sores that are not treated can lead to hospitalization and can require skin grafts.

### Preventing Pressure Sores

This is one case where an ounce of prevention really is worth a pound of cure, especially if the cure is a skin graft.

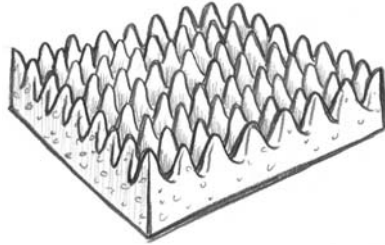


- ✓ **Check the skin daily.** (Bath time is ideal.)
- ✓ **Provide a well-balanced diet**, with enough vitamin C, zinc, and protein.
- ✓ **Keep skin dry and clean** (urine left on the skin can cause sores and infection). Use an ointment to protect the skin.
- ✓ **Keep clothing loose.**
- ✓ **Turn a person who cannot get out of bed at least every 2 hours.** Change the person’s positions. Smooth wrinkles out of sheets.

Article continues  
on page 2

## Continued from page 1

- ✓ **Lightly tape foam to bony sections of the body** using paper tape, which will not hurt the skin when peeled off.
- ✓ **Use flannel or all-cotton** sheets to absorb moisture.



- ✓ **Provide an egg-crate or sheepskin mattress pad** for added comfort.
- ✓ **Avoid using a plastic sheet** or a Chux if they cause sweating.
- ✓ When the person is sitting, **encourage changing the body position** every 15 minutes.
- ✓ Use foam, gel or air pads on chair seats to cushion the buttocks.
- ✓ Change the type of chair the person sits in; try an open-back garden chair occasionally.

- ✓ Provide **exercise** as much as possible.

## Treatment Guidelines

If you see pressure sores in your daily checking of the skin, alert the healthcare team.

- To reduce the chance of infection, **wear disposable gloves** when providing care.
- **Use pillows or a foam pad** with at least 1 inch of padding to support the body.
- Never position the person on his or her bony parts.
- Do not let the person lie on pressure sores.
- Follow the doctor or nurse's treatment plan in applying medication to sores and bandaging the areas to protect them while they heal.

It is estimated that 1 to 3 million people in the U.S. develop pressure sores each year.

Source: *The National Pressure Ulcer Advisory Panel*

## SHINGLES

Shingles is a viral infection that causes a painful rash. Although shingles can occur anywhere on your body, it most often appears as a single stripe of blisters that wraps around either the left or the right side of your torso.

Shingles is caused by the varicella-zoster virus — the same virus that causes chickenpox. After you've had chickenpox, the virus lies inactive in nerve tissue near your spinal cord and brain. Years later, the virus may reactivate as shingles. While it isn't a life-threatening condition, shingles can be very painful. Vaccines can help reduce the risk of shingles, while early treatment can help shorten a shingles infection and lessen the chance of complications.

Source: *Mayoclinic.org*

## Taking Care of Yourself—Too Much Sitting

Too much time spent in a chair could shorten our lives, even if we exercise, according to a study that finds the links between lengthy sitting time and death among middle-aged and older adults. The study also suggests that we might be able to reduce our risks by taking a few steps every half-hour or so. Being seated and unmoving all day is unhealthy. The longer people sit on a daily basis, the likelier they are to develop various diseases, including obesity, diabetes and heart disease. The men and women who sat for the most hours every day had the highest risk for early death, especially if this sitting often continued for longer than 30 minutes at a stretch.



Try setting an alert on your phone or computer to ping every half-hour and remind you that now is time to get up and move.

Source: NYT; Get Up, Stand Up

## Inspiration

*A sense of humor can help you overlook the unattractive, tolerate the unpleasant, cope with the unexpected, and smile through the unbearable.*

~Moshe Waldoks

## Live Life Laughing!

Doctor, what is the difference between an allergy and an itch?  
About \$100.



## Memory Care

People with Alzheimer's may get upset when somebody touches them. You may be trying to do something to help him, such as checking for a pressure sore, but he doesn't understand what's going on. He may be feeling uncomfortable, powerless, frightened, tired, in pain, or confused.

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## SAFETY TIPS—Edema

Edema is swelling or puffiness of parts of the body. It is caused by water that is trapped in body tissues. Edema usually happens in the feet, ankles, and legs. It also can affect the face and hands.

Many things can cause edema. Sometimes gravity pulls water down into the legs and feet. Sitting in one place for too long can cause edema of the legs. Eating food with too much salt, which causes the body to retain water, can make the problem worse.

Congestive heart failure and liver, kidney and thyroid diseases can cause Edema cannot be “cured.” The only way to treat it is to treat the condition that is *causing* it. To keep the swelling down:

To keep the swelling down:

- ★ Put a pillow under the legs when lying down.
- ★ Wear support stockings.
- ★ Do not sit or stand for too long without moving.
- ★ Follow the doctor's orders about limiting the amount of salt eaten.

Source: National Institute of Health

NEXT ISSUE... COMMUNICATION & CONFIDENTIALITY