NEPEAN INTENSIVE CARE UNIT

Pressure injuries in intensive care

Information for patients and families

Our goal is to identify risks early and take all steps to minimise risk.

What is a pressure injury?

A pressure injury (sometimes called a pressure ulcer or bed sore) is damage to the skin and underlying tissues caused by pressure, friction, or reduced blood flow.

Patients in Intensive Care (ICU) are at increased risk of developing a pressure injury because critical illness affects circulation, mobility, nutrition and the body's ability to heal.

Pressure injuries can develop quickly and may occur despite appropriate prevention measures.

A pressure injury, once developed, can cause pain and immobility, and can take a long time to heal – leading to a longer stay in ICU and in hospital.

Critically ill patients are at increased risk of pressure injury due to immobility, reduced tissue perfusion, organ failure and the need for life support equipment.

Why are ICU patients at higher risk?

Pressure injuries in ICU are not only caused by lying in bed. They can also occur from:

Oxygen masks
including non-invasive masks

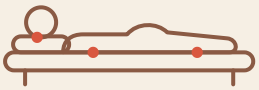
Breathing tubes
endotracheal tubes

Feeding tubes
nasogastric tubes

ECG leads
and monitoring equipment

Other devices
leads or cables attached to the patient

Our staff regularly assess both the skin and the medical device to reduce this risk.

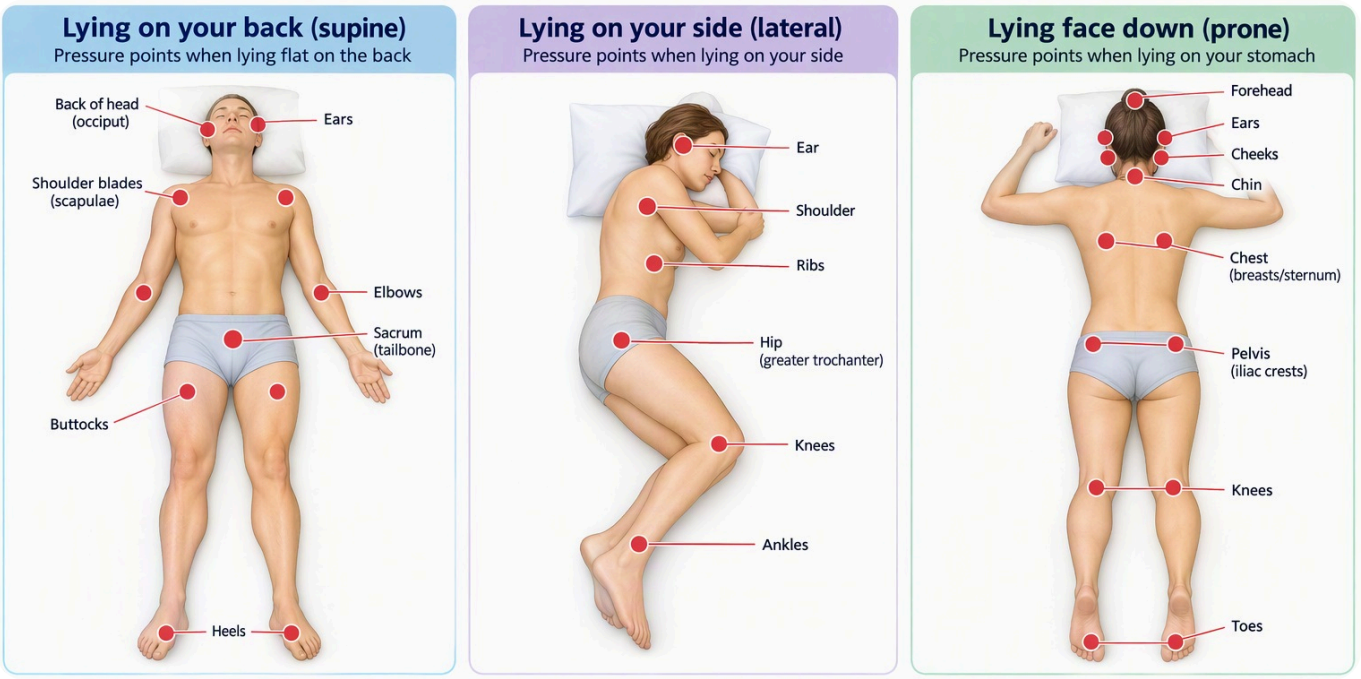


Lying face down (the prone position)

Some patients in our ICU with severe respiratory failure may spend time lying face down, known as the prone position. Families often have concerns about facial swelling and skin marks.

Common pressure injury risk areas

Pressure injuries can occur in any position. These diagrams show common areas at risk.



Everyone is at risk. Pressure injuries can develop quickly and may occur despite the best care. Regular repositioning, skin inspection and the use of pressure-relieving equipment can help reduce the risk.

Warning signs of a pressure injury

Redness or skin discolouration

Tenderness or pain in the affected area

Blistering

Broken skin



Early sign of a pressure injury on a heel

What is the ICU team doing to prevent pressure injuries?

The ICU team will:

- Assess pressure injury risk every day
- Use a pressure-relieving mattress
- Check and reposition medical devices
- Manage moisture from perspiration or incontinence
- Reposition patients regularly
- Inspect the skin routinely
- Provide nutrition and hydration support
- Escalate concerns to wound care specialists when required

FOR PATIENTS

What you can do to help prevent pressure injuries

- Change your position regularly – ask staff to assist you if required
- Tell staff if you are uncomfortable – report pain, pressure, numbness or discomfort
- Let staff know if a mask or a tube feels tight or is rubbing
- Check your skin, looking for redness, marks, blisters or damaged skin
- Take part in mobilisation – sit out of bed, stand or walk when it is safe to do so. Our physiotherapists will help you with mobilisation

FOR FAMILIES

How can families help?

Families are an important part of pressure injury prevention. You can:

- Let staff know if you notice redness, marks, swelling or skin damage
- Tell staff if a mask, tube or device appears to be causing pressure
- Help encourage eating and drinking if appropriate (check with staff first)
- Ask questions about pressure injury prevention
- Support repositioning plans with the patient

Please don't reposition the patient or medical devices without assistance from staff.

Important to know

Some pressure injuries may develop despite appropriate prevention due to the severity of the illness and the body's ability to heal during critical illness.

Our goal is to identify risks early and take all steps to minimise risk.