

## 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*

- **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.
- **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** 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.
- 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. Source: National Pressure Ulcer Advisory Panel

*Homecare has 12 caregivers currently working and assisting 14 families. Several of our folks caught the flu and we were unable to visit due to illness. Some of the elderly were left weak and unable to stay in their home for recovery so went to rehab centers. We pray they make it back home safe and sound.*

*I hope you stay healthy and have a Happy Valentine's Day!*

