

Caring for your child's skin - preventing pressure injuries

Information for parents and/or caregivers

Welcome to the Southern Adelaide Local Health Network. This information sheet is designed to assist you in caring for your child's skin in an effort to prevent pressure injuries.

Skin

Our skin is the biggest organ of our body and it has many roles. It is important to keep the skin intact to prevent infection. Sometimes pressure ulcers can develop when a person is unwell. This can be related to a variety of factors. This brochure is about how to care for your child's skin while in hospital and at home.

What are pressure injuries?

A pressure injury can occur when there is constant pressure applied to one area of the skin. This may occur when a person is not able to move themselves in bed or while sitting in a chair for long periods of time. It could also occur from an external device such as a splint or tubing.

Friction on bed sheets can also cause a break in the skin.

Excess moisture in an area e.g. incontinence (soiling) can increase the chances of developing a pressure ulcer/area. In a child the areas most commonly affected are:

- Back of head
- Ears
- Heels
- Elbows
- Base of spine
- Hips
- Buttocks (nappy area)
- Around the nostrils if your child is on oxygen
- Intravenous sites and bungs

What do pressure injuries look like?

A pressure area may begin looking like a bruised area and the colour may range from red to brown. The skin may have a shiny stretched appearance.

If this progresses, a wound may develop. This is when the skin becomes broken. In some cases a hole or cavity can develop.

What can we do to prevent pressure injury?

While admitted in hospital, your child's skin will be looked at regularly by the nurse. The nurse will complete an assessment form regarding your child's skin and look at any areas at risk of skin breakdown.

The nurse will be able to record if your child is at risk of developing a pressure injury.

The following questions will be asked:

- How active is your child?
- Is your child incontinent of urine or faeces? (Does your child soil?)
- Does your child have any medical conditions that may affect blood circulation?

What to do if you child is at risk?

If the assessment has determined your child is at risk of developing a pressure injury, there are a number of things that can be performed to reduce the chance of a pressure injury developing.

If medically safe to do so we can:

Re-position and provide regular turning - this can reduce pressure on specific areas.

Provide special equipment e.g. air mattresses - air mattresses can relieve pressure in specific areas. Regular turning is still required if your child is on an air mattress.

Do regular nappy/pad changes - this will reduce the exposure to moisture.

Apply protective barrier cream or wipes - provides a protective layer between the skin and urine or faeces, or around the nose if oxygen tubing in place.

What can parents or caregivers do when your child is in hospital?

While in hospital we encourage parents or caregivers to be involved in their child's care. You can help by looking at your child's skin regularly. If you are concerned about an area, we encourage you to discuss this with the nursing staff. If you feel comfortable you can assist with re-positioning. The above care can be continued at home if required.

Not recommended

Massaging over bony areas is not recommended as this causes more friction and could cause further skin breaks.

When your child goes home:

Your child's skin care can be continued at home if required. The nurse will educate you regarding the care required. If your child requires dressings prior to discharge the nurse will organise a community nursing service to change dressings.

If you have any concerns or questions regarding your child's care at home contact your health professional.

For more information

Paediatric Unit
 Women's and Children's Division
 Flinders Medical Centre
 Flinders Drive
 Bedford Park SA 5042
 Telephone: 08 8204 5511
www.sahealth.sa.gov.au



<https://creativecommons.org>



This document has been reviewed and endorsed by consumers.

If you require this information in an alternative language or format please contact SA Health on the details provided and they will make every effort to assist you.