



## SPINAL INJURIES UNIT

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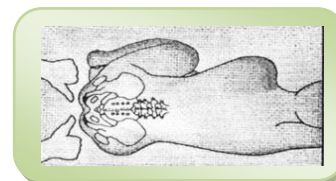
AUSTRALIA

## Returning to Sitting after a Skin Breakdown

*This is general information on returning to sit after skin breakdown that has occurred on your hips, tailbone or buttocks and the skin breakdown has not required surgery. SPOT will be able to advise you during any step of the sitting program and help problem solve any issues.*

### Getting ready to sit

- Where on your body is the skin area and what caused it? This will help identify when it will be at risk and prevent the skin area from breaking down again.
- Has the breakdown healed? There should be **NO** open areas including scabs, bleeding areas or hard scaly tissue.
- Scar tissue is weaker than normal skin and it has poor blood flow to the area. It is more likely to split and it will be harder to heal each time it breaks down. This is why getting the skin ready to sit is very important for future prevention.
- Heal the area in a stretched position. This will help prevent the area from splitting when you start to sit. You could continue using the shower commode or toilet if suitable to keep your hips stretched. You could also stretch by having your hips and knees bent for some of the time.
- Check all of your equipment. Is it suitable? What condition is it in?



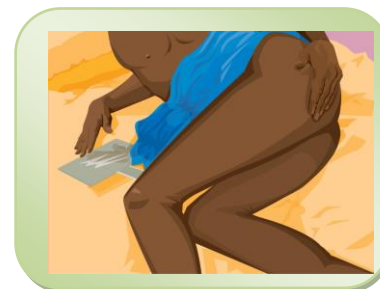
### Why do a sitting program?

- A sitting program will allow your skin to gradually get used to:
  - Pressure: Where sitting can directly affect the blood flow to the skin and underlying tissue
  - Shear: This is rubbing over the newly healed area and underlying tissue
  - Stretch: In sitting, the hip position causes stretch to the skin



### During the sitting program

- Only do the sitting program in the wheelchair, not on the bed or the shower commode. Use a cushion that will maximise surface area contact to reduce pressure. Check with a therapist if you have questions about your cushion.
- Consider how you are going to transfer into the wheelchair and the impact on your healed skin area. If you have been resting in bed for a long period, your transfers may not be as safe as before.
- Monitor the area:
  - Check by feel and by sight. You could use a mirror or take a photograph of the area.
  - Before and after showering.
  - Before and after each sit.
- Observe for redness that doesn't go away within 30 minutes or any damage to the skin such as a blister or split. If you have any problems, you should go back to bed rest, wait for it to heal then restart the program from Day 1.
- Rest at least an hour between sits.
- Limit activities that increase shear to the area such as pushing your wheelchair long distances or over rough ground.
- Managing moisture on the skin is also important. Please speak with your community nurse.



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**After the sitting program**

- To see what may have contributed to your skin breakdown, consider:
  - Your posture in the wheelchair and where you take the most pressure
  - Your daily activities – transfers, showering, any particular habits
  - Your lifestyle activities and surfaces you sit on – travel, work, recreation
- Equipment trials for any new equipment should be done after you complete the sitting program. Talk to your therapist.

**An example of a sitting program**

DAY 1	30 mins <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Minimum 60 min break</b>	30 mins <input type="checkbox"/>
DAY 2	45 mins <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Minimum 60 min break</b>	45 mins <input type="checkbox"/>
DAY 3	45 mins <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Minimum 60 min break</b>	1 hour <input type="checkbox"/>
DAY 4	1 hour <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Minimum 60 min break</b>	1 ½ hours <input type="checkbox"/>
DAY 5	1 ½ hours <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Minimum 60 min break</b>	2 hours <input type="checkbox"/>
DAY 6	2 ½ hours <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Minimum 60 min break</b>	2 ½ hours <input type="checkbox"/>
DAY 7	SIT CONTINUOUSLY FOR 4 HOURS <input type="checkbox"/>		
DAY 8	SIT CONTINUOUSLY FOR 6 HOURS <input type="checkbox"/>		
DAY 9	SIT CONTINUOUSLY FOR 8 HOURS <input type="checkbox"/>		
DAY 10	NORMAL SITTING		

If you notice any problems when doing the sitting program, you may need to think about your personal care needs, equipment and any other issues. Talk to your health professional.

**Last Reviewed October 2020**

**Review Due October 2022**

