

Skin Care and Pressure Areas

SPINAL INJURIES UNIT

Ph: 3176 2737

Fax: 3176 7462

OUTPATIENT DEPARTMENT

Ph: 3176 2641

Fax: 3176 5644

Postal and Location

Princess Alexandra Hospital
Ipswich Rd
Woolloongabba QLD 4102
AUSTRALIA

TRANSITIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM

Ph: 3406 2322

Fax: 3406 2399

Email

trp@health.qld.gov.au

Postal

PO Box 6053
Buranda, QLD, 4102

Location

3rd Floor, Centro Buranda
Cnr Cornwall St & Ipswich Rd
Buranda, QLD, 4102
AUSTRALIA

SPINAL OUTREACH TEAM

Ph: 3406 2300

Freecall 1800 624 832
(for regional clients)

Fax : 3406 2399

Email

spot@health.qld.gov.au

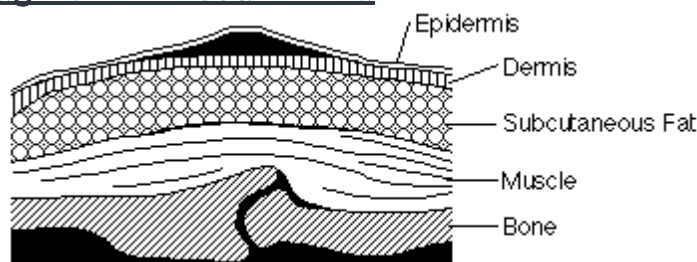
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Stage One Pressure Area



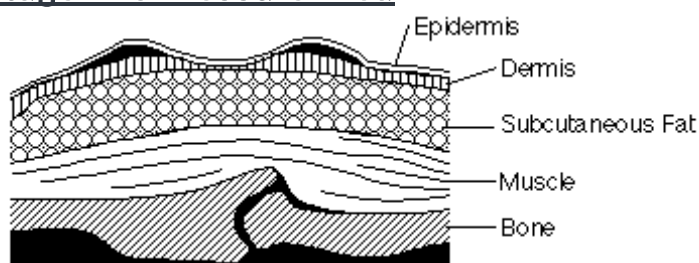
What does it look like?

- Skin is reddened
- Skin blanches to pressure
- Red areas will fade quickly (within 30 minutes) when pressure is relieved
- Skin is unbroken

What should I do?

- Stay off it completely until it is gone.
- Keep it clean and dry. Wash with mild soap and water. Pat it dry carefully – do not rub vigorously.
- Make sure that you are eating well and drinking plenty of fluids.
- Try to determine the cause of the problem and do something about it. Check your cushion, mattress, wheelchair, turning routine, clothes, shoes, transfers etc.
- If the area does not go away, or reoccurs regularly, seek help or advice from your local doctor, hospital or the Spinal Outreach Team.

Stage Two Pressure Area



What does it look like?

- There is the presence of a blister or a break in the skin.
- Skin is reddened and does not fade when pressure is reduced.
- The site may be painful (depending on the presence of sensation).



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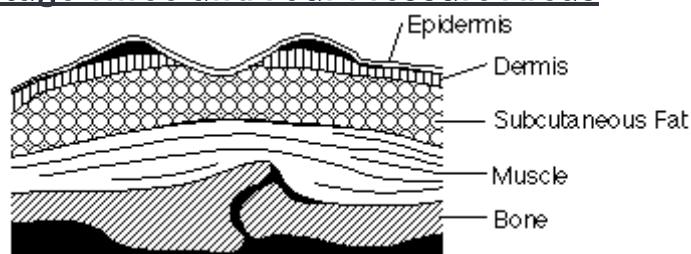
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What should I do?

- Stay off it until the skin has healed completely!
- Make sure that you check for signs of healing or deterioration at least daily.
- If there are signs of infection, or you have concerns regarding healing, please seek medical advice.

Stage Three and Four Pressure Areas



What does it look like?

- There is a break in the skin that extends into the subcutaneous and fat tissue (stage three) or down to muscle and bone (stage four).
- Serous ooze (fluid draining) may be present.
- There may be dead tissue in and around the area.
- The site may be painful (depending on the presence of sensation).

What should I do?

- These areas often require specialised care and dressings that are performed on a regular basis. In many cases surgery may be required.
- Seek assistance from your local doctor or hospital immediately. The sooner treatment is commenced, the better the end result.
- Stay off the area completely at all times until your wound has completely healed.
- Seek assistance from your local health professional if you require additional help for your daily routine.
- Seek advice regarding sitting again once the area has completely healed. Scars heal with scar tissue that is not as elastic as normal skin. This may take some time to stretch, and has the potential to tear if you don't take it slowly.



Fact Sheet

Queensland Spinal Cord Injuries Service

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How do I know if my area is healing?

- The area will get smaller.
- New, pink tissue usually starts to form around the edges of the area, slowly moving in to the centre.
- Some bleeding may be present – this shows good circulation to the area which is important to assist healing.

What are the signs of trouble?

- Any increase in the size of the area.
- Any increase in the amount of fluid draining from the area.
- Any change in colour or smell of the fluid draining from the area. Greenish coloured fluid is usually a sign of infection.
- Any increase in the redness around the area (also a sign of infection).
- Black areas start to form in the area.
- You develop a fever.

What can happen if I don't act quickly?

- Pressure areas can be life threatening!
- Infection can spread to bone, the blood or other parts of the body.
- You may have to spend long periods of time in bed and possibly in hospital.
- If the area does not heal, surgery or amputations may be necessary.
- You may develop autonomic dysreflexia.
- Your lifestyle may be severely affected.

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Queensland
Government

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