

Caring for your skin

This information is for patients who are staying at our Inpatient Units and explains how to keep your skin clean, comfortable, and reduce the risk of developing pressure ulcers.



The skin is the body's largest organ. Like other organs, the skin may not function properly when we are poorly and confined to a bed or chair for long periods.

Often deteriorating health makes changes to the skin difficult to prevent and to heal, as your blood supply naturally decreases, leading to less oxygen and nutrients reaching your skin.

Pressure ulcers, known as bed sores, are areas of damage to the skin through underlying tissue and range from superficial patches to large open wounds.

Factors that increase our risk of developing pressure ulcers include:

- Any advanced progressive disease.
- General frailty.
- Incontinence.
- Weakness and decreased movement.
- Impaired immune system.
- Low blood pressure.
- Some medications.
- Poor appetite, weight loss, dehydration or obesity.
- Pressure, shearing or friction forces to the skin.



Keeping patients' skin both clean and intact is important. Good skin care reduces discomfort and prevents pressure ulcers, whilst helping patients remain as active and dignified as possible.

On admission to Birmingham Hospice, our colleagues will discuss how they can help to keep you comfortable, treat any skin injuries you may have and discuss ways to reduce the risk of developing pressure damage or further injuries.



This may include:

- A treatment plan for any skin injuries you already have.
- Inspection of your skin for any changes, especially over bony prominences. This may include taking photographs, for which we will ask your consent.
- Aids such as specific types of bed, mattress or pressure-relieving cushions, pillows, slide sheets or hoists.
- Making a plan to assist you with repositioning. We will consider your wishes and positions that you prefer and always explain what we are going to do and give you a rationale before we proceed.
- Reviewing how you are feeling after you have been repositioned. We can discuss with the Medical Team if you need pain relief prior to this procedure being commenced.
- Encouragement to eat and drink as you are able.

This list is not exhaustive and you may have needs that are individual to you that you would like to discuss.

