Bed sores

Bed sores are injuries caused by sitting or lying too long in the same position. They are also called pressure sores, pressure ulcers or pressure injuries. Bed sores often form where your child’s bones are close to the surface of the skin, like behind the knees and on the hips, back, ankles, heels, head, ears, and elbows.

• Friction causes bed sores when the skin is rubbed over bed linens or clothing. Wrinkles in sheets, shirts, or stockings may also cause friction.
• Shearing causes bed sores when the bony areas of the body (ankles, hips, tailbone, and others) are pressed into the soft tissues during movement. This can happen when a child slides down in bed.

When should I watch for bed sores?
Watch for bed sores if your child has:
• Decreased activity and movement
• Laid in one position for too long
• An illness or disability that makes it hard to move around
• A lack of sensation or can’t feel an area of the body as well
• Not received enough nutrition or fluids
• Too much moisture on their skin (like urine, bowel movement, or sweat)
• A bacterial skin infection
• Poor physical health

How do I prevent bed sores?
• Change your child’s position often. At first, check for redness as often as every 20 minutes or as long as every two hours. If you notice a red area anywhere, change your child’s position more often.
• Make sure your child tells you when they are uncomfortable (if they are old enough to talk) so you can move them if needed.
• Use special mattress overlays and cushions. Do not use sheepskin or a doughnut cushion to relieve pressure.
• Put pillows between your child’s ankles or knees to keep them from touching each other.

What causes bed sores?
Bed sores are caused by pressure, friction, and shearing.
• Pressure on your child’s skin may stop the blood flow to the area and cause an injury. This can happen quickly with great pressure or over a long period of time with light pressure. A reddened area should disappear within 30 minutes after the pressure is removed. If it doesn’t, tell your child’s healthcare provider about the problem before more skin is damaged.
• Have your child get up and walk around if their healthcare provider says it’s okay.

• Check your child’s skin regularly and thoroughly. Look for red spots, blisters, or bruises.

• Wash your child’s skin gently; scrubbing the skin causes friction. Pat your child’s skin dry and apply lotion or cream. Moisturized skin is less likely to develop sores.

• Clean your child carefully after they urinate or poop.

• Make sure your child eats healthy foods high in protein and drinks plenty of liquids.

• Talk to a physical therapist about activities your child can do.

When should I call my child’s healthcare provider?

Call your child’s healthcare provider if you notice:

• Any reddened area that does not fade within 30 minutes

• A blister, open area, scrape, draining wound, or black leathery area

• A hard lump of skin