Keeping Your Child Safe
Preventing Pressure Ulcers

Working together is the best way to keep your child safe.
Please read the important information below.

WHAT ARE PRESSURE ULCERS?
Pressure ulcers are sores that are a result of constant pressure on your child’s skin. Pressure can cause damage to many layers of skin. Pressure ulcers are also known as bedsores or pressure sores.

Pressure ulcers occur when there is ongoing compression of the soft tissue between bony parts of the body and an external surface. They usually occur on the skin that overlies the heels, the back of the head and the tail bone. They can also occur on the ears, elbows, spine and shoulder blades.

Pressure ulcers can vary in severity. In the more mild form, the skin is still intact and there is redness of the area. In the more severe forms, the ulcer penetrates through the skin and you are able to see exposed fat, bone, tendon or muscle underneath.

Pressure Ulcer Cause
Constant pressure compresses skin layers, which can cut off blood flow. This can damage the skin layers causing a pressure ulcer.

WHO IS AT RISK?
The risk factors for developing pressure ulcers include:

- Decreased mobility (often patients who are restricted to a bed or wheelchair).
- Moisture left on the skin from sweating or unclean diapers.
- Continuous pressure from an external device such as a splint or oxygen mask, or a piece of tubing or equipment your child may be lying on such as an oxygen tube or IV (intravenous) tube.
- Poor nutrition does not cause pressure ulcers but lack of nutrition can put someone at higher risk of developing pressure ulcers.

Pressure Ulcer Caused by External Device
Constant pressure from lying on an external device like tubing can also compress skin layers causing a pressure ulcer.
PREVENTING PRESSURE ULCERS
The following tips will help prevent pressure ulcers from developing:

Protect skin and promote good skin care
• Change your child’s position often throughout the day and night, unless your child’s doctor tells you not to. While in the hospital, the nurse will frequently change your child’s position.
• Make sure your child is not lying on a tube or piece of equipment for long periods of time.
• Check your child’s skin for redness or sores at bath time, when changing their position, or when moving them from one surface to another (for example from the bed to the wheelchair).
• Make sure your child is resting on a comfortable surface such as a wheelchair seat pad or mattress.
• Be gentle when giving your child a bath.

Protect skin from excessive moisture
• Keep your child’s skin dry. Quickly clean up moisture from body fluids such as sweat and urine.
• Be gentle when cleaning your child’s skin.
  Use a soft cloth and a soft touch.

COMPLICATIONS FROM PRESSURE ULCERS
If pressure ulcers are left unnoticed or untreated, then they can result in complications such as:

• Pain
• Infection

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR CHILD’S DOCTOR OR MEDICAL TEAM
If you are concerned about your child’s skin, consider asking the following questions:

• Is my child’s illness affecting their skin?
• Are there protective barrier creams that might help?
• Is there anything that can be used to prevent moisture from damaging the skin?
• Is my child on the best possible surface to prevent skin breakdown (for example wheelchair seat pad or mattress)?
• Could advice from a dietitian on how to eat well help my child’s skin condition?

If you are not in the hospital, consider taking a photograph of the area so that you can show your doctor or nurse.

KEY POINTS
• Pressure ulcers can damage many layers of skin.
• Be gentle when giving your child a bath.
• Change your child’s position often, unless your child’s doctor has told you not to.
• Make sure your child is resting on a comfortable surface (for example wheelchair seat pad or mattress).

SPEAK UP AND ASK QUESTIONS. TALK TO YOUR HEALTH-CARE TEAM
• You know your child best. Speak up if you feel something’s not right or you have concerns about your child’s care.
• Give your health-care team an up-to-date description of your child’s health.
• Tell us about any treatments or surgeries by any other health-care professionals, including naturopaths or herbalists.
• Tell us about your child’s special physical, emotional or equipment needs or about any special aids like glasses or hearing aids.
• Share unique things about your child with caregivers that may be important for your child’s overall care (e.g. if they dislike loud noises or bright lights).
• Tell us if there are any changes in your child’s condition that concern you. You may notice things the health-care team doesn’t.