

How To Protect Your Heels During Your Stay In Hospital

Why do I need to protect my heels?

Certain medical conditions such as diabetes, poor circulation or rheumatoid arthritis mean that the skin on the heel is very vulnerable to pressure and when you are poorly and in hospital they can be at risk of developing a heel pressure sore.

How will I know if I have damaged my heels?

You need to check your heels frequently. Ideally, do this every day. If this is difficult or you are too poorly then a nurse will check them for you. A family member could also help. Remember, just looking at your feet does not count as “checking them”. They need to be lifted up so that all of the heel can be seen. The damage may be in the form of redness, a blister, a black area or an open wound. Also beware that if you have diabetes

then you may not feel any pain or discomfort due to diabetic nerve damage, this is called neuropathy.

What should I do if I notice any of these changes?

Alert a member of staff. The damaged heel will need to be elevated off the bed using either a leg trough or a foot splint.

What can I do to prevent problems?

If you know you are at risk, alert a member of staff and they will arrange for you to have a special mattress or a heel pad in the bed. It is important that you don't rest too much weight on your heels for a prolonged period of time. For example, if you are sitting out in a chair, don't rest your heels on the floor, make sure your feet are in slippers and are fully flat on the floor.

If you sit with your feet on a foot stool, ensure that your heels are hanging

over the end and that your knees are supported.

If you need to put your feet up for a long period of time then you may be better off in bed.

As well as checking your heels every day it is important that you keep the skin in good condition. Diabetes as well as advancing age can result in the skin drying out and it is important to massage cream into the heels regularly. This not only moisturises the skin but gently stimulates the circulation.

It is important to avoid using your heels to lever yourself up the bed. Use your arms as much as possible and if you have any difficulty ask the nurse for help.

Please contact the Podiatry Department on ☎ (01803) 217711 if you:

--require further information
--require this leaflet in a different format

PATIENT INFORMATION



Heels

How to protect them whilst
in hospital

Department of Podiatry
and Foot Health