

## Pressure management and your wheelchair

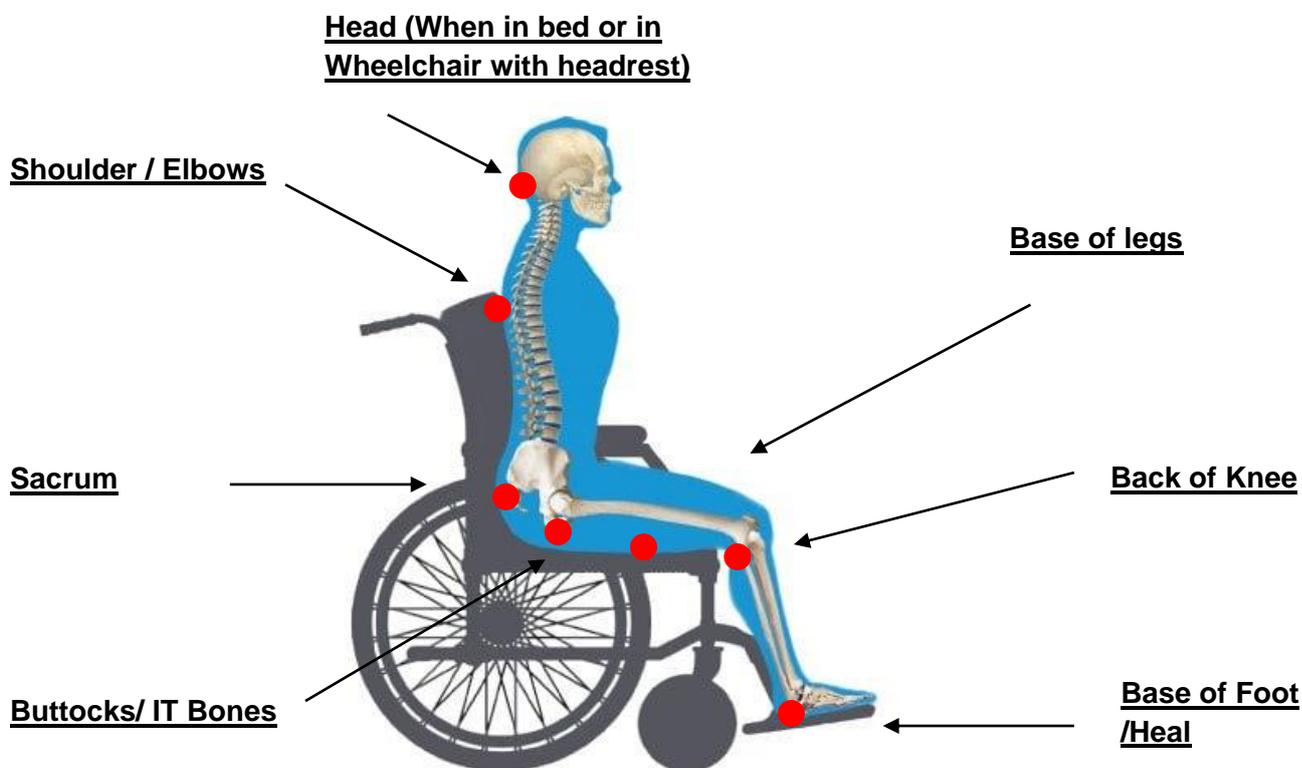
### What is a pressure sore/Ulcer?

A pressure ulcer is damage that occurs on the skin and underlying tissue. Pressure ulcers are caused by three main things:

- **Pressure** - the weight of the body pressing down on the skin
- **Shear** - the layers of the skin are forced to slide over one another or over deeper tissues for example when you slide down or are pulled up, a bed chair or when you are transferring to and from your wheelchair.
- **Friction** - rubbing the skin

The most common places for pressure ulcers to develop are over bony prominences (bones close to the skin). When sitting for long periods of time, pressure ulcers develop most commonly around the buttocks and sacrum area.

Common Pressure points are shown below:

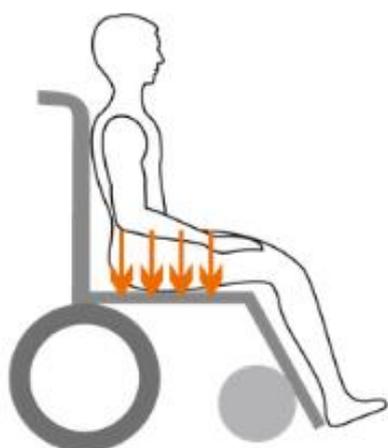


Anyone can get a pressure ulcer, but some people are more likely to develop one than others. People with a pressure ulcer are also at risk of developing another elsewhere on their body.

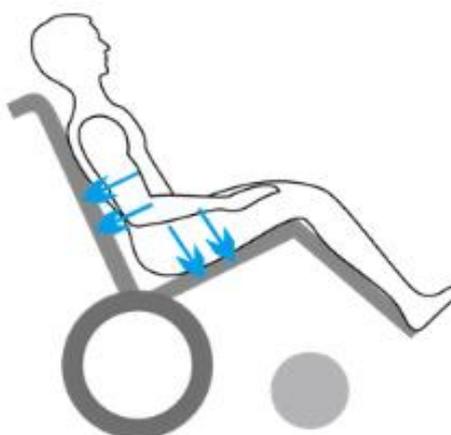
**You are more at risk of getting a pressure ulcer if you stay in your wheelchair for long periods without transferring.**

### **How to prevent pressure ulcers developing:**

- You should not stay in your wheelchair for more than **2-3 hours** at one time without transferring and allowing pressure relief.
- Remember! In most cases, your wheelchair is for **transport only** and should not be used to sit in all day in replacement of a suitable chair.
- If you have a Tilt in Space wheelchair, current guidance advises you to have your chair taken back into its full degree of tilt for **10 minutes per hour** you are sitting in the chair. This changes the pressure points- see diagram below. If you can tilt for longer than 10 minutes then do so.



Pressure is centralized on a regular wheelchair



Pressure is distributed using the Tilt-in-Space function

**If you have a pressure sore:**

- **You should not use your wheelchair if you have a pressure sore. You should wait for this to heal and follow instruction from relevant health professionals such as district nurses on pressure management. Your wheelchair is for transport only and should not be used in replacement of a suitable static chair.**
- **The wheelchair service will advise you that if you have an open pressure sore, you will not be re-assessed until after the sore has healed as you should not be using your wheelchair.**
- **Please note- if you have had a pressure sore and have been re-assessed in relation to different cushions, should you choose to sit in your wheelchair for longer than advised, the risk of you developing a pressure sore is high, regardless of the type of cushion provided.**