For practical advice our Customer Care Team provide a (PALS) service. Contact Customer Care Team on 0151 529 6100, email: customercareteam@thewaltoncentre.nhs.uk or visit www.thewaltoncentre.nhs.uk

Alternatively log on to:

neurosupport.org.uk

Or call 0151 298 2999 for advice and information for people with neurological conditions and their carers.

Tissue Viability Information Leaflet
Pressure Ulcers and the complications they can cause

This leaflet contains a graphic image, please do not be offended it is intended to illustrate the problems that can occur from these wounds
Pressure Ulcers

Prevention and Management of Pressure Ulcers

You have been given this information leaflet because you have been assessed as having a pressure ulcer or as being at risk of developing one. It will give you information on what a pressure ulcer is and the complications they can cause.

What is a pressure ulcer?

A pressure ulcer is an area of damage to the skin and may involve the tissues underneath. They have also been known as ‘bed sores’, ‘pressure sores’ or ‘decubitus ulcers’.

They are caused by:

**Pressure** – the weight of the body against a hard surface such as a bed or chair;

**Shear** - if a person slips or slides down a bed or chair;

**Friction** - frequent movement over a surface.

Pressure ulcers can be life threatening and life limiting it is important that you do everything you can to prevent pressure ulcers occurring or deteriorating.

Once a pressure ulcer is present, particularly grade 3 or 4, they can be difficult to heal and place many restrictions on your normal daily living.

- You could be confined to bed nursed side to side for several months.
- Any rehabilitation needed would have to be suspended until the wound heals, this could be several months.
- Infection can cause wounds to smell and leak which could cause embarrassment.
- These wounds can be painful

‘Prevention is better than cure’

Please take ownership of your own body and any advice given to ensure that this does not happen to you.

It is very important that you consider the advice given to you in this leaflet. If you do not understand anything or you require further information please speak to the staff looking after you.
It is vital that pressure is kept off an area that is painful or red. You will be repositioned every 2 hours by the staff looking after you and kept off the affected area. Pressure ulcers are graded by their severity starting with a grade 1 which is the least severe up to grade 4 which is the most severe.

Complications from pressure ulcers can include;

Sepsis—this occurs when bacteria enters your bloodstream through the broken skin and spreads throughout your body, a rapidly progressing, life-threatening condition that can cause organ failure.

Cellulitis is an acute infection of your skin's connective tissue causing pain, redness and swelling, all of which can be severe. Cellulitis can also lead to life-threatening complications, including sepsis and meningitis — an infection of the membrane and fluid surrounding your brain and spinal cord.

Bone and joint infections can develop if the infection from a pressure ulcer burrows deep into your joints and bones. Joint infections can damage cartilage and tissue, and bone infections (osteomyelitis) may reduce the function of your joints and limbs.
These wounds can deteriorate very quickly if the pressure is not relieved from the area at risk. It is important that you understand this and cooperate in any treatment plan that is developed. Obviously the staff looking after you cannot force you to cooperate with a treatment plan and they are unable to stop you making an unwise decision. However if you choose not to cooperate this will be documented in your case notes and shared with other health professionals involved in your care. You will also be asked to sign a disclaimer confirming that you are going against advice.

This is a potentially life threatening pressure ulcer. This can develop from sitting or lying in 1 position for prolonged periods of time.