

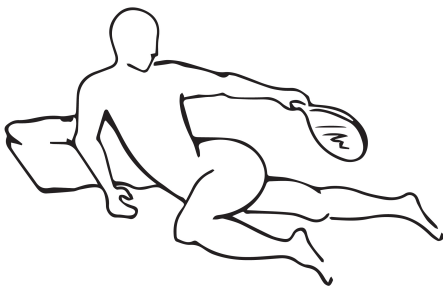
Pillars of Skin Care

Push Up



Do a push up every ten minutes for 20/30 seconds when sitting anywhere, on any surface, and irrespective of what you are doing. Sitting without doing a push up is like drunken driving.

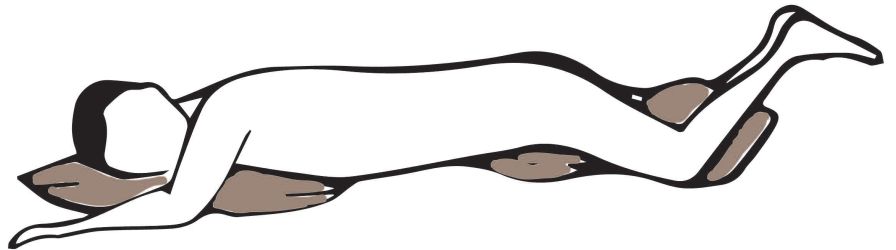
Practice Everyday



Check your skin, especially lower back and buttock areas. every morning using a mirror (do this yourself or use a caregiver, if needed) and lightly massage by applying a few drops of coconut oil.

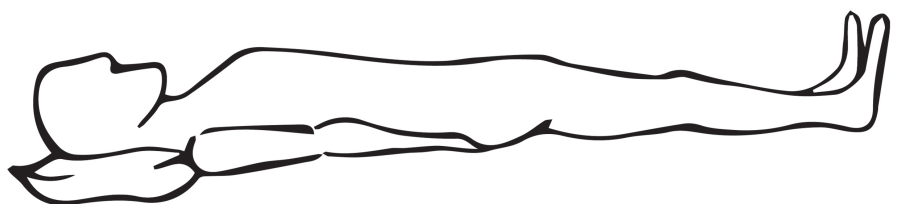
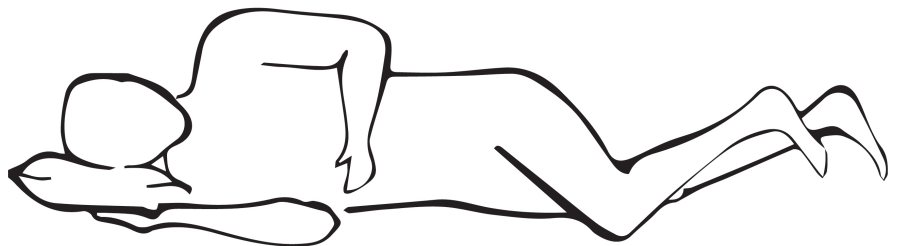
Good Nutrition

Prone Position



Lying down in prone position for as long as is possible, especially at night, is the safest. Persons with cervical level injury must check with their doctors whether this position is okay, as a few of them could have respiratory / breathing issues. Lying down in prone position is the safest for a spinal cord injured person as the five most vulnerable spots are completely safe in this position. Make sure you do a push every 2 / 3 hours.

Position Change every two hours



Turning of position every two hours when lying down in any position (left side, right side and supine) other than prone. This provides pressure relief and helps maintain skin quality.

Skin-care is an important aspect in the lives of persons with spinal cord injury. To safeguard our health and to sit, stand, walk, work and be active in the community and in the family, good quality skin is a must; the more so for skin in the areas of the body where you have no touch or pain sensation or only limited sensation.

Good Practices

Sitting & Travelling

- Avoid sitting directly on hard surfaces and use a pressure distributing cushion seat.
- Do not rest in the comforts of an airbed, waterbed or air cushion. If you do not turn every two hours or do push-ups at least every 10 minutes while sitting, none of these expensive options can protect your skin.
- Do not leave any sharp objects, coins and keys on the mattress or wheelchair cushion.
- Check your mattresses and wheelchair cushion once a day to ensure that they are in good shape.
- Ensure your mobile phone, coins and keys do not slide under your thighs and buttocks while on a wheelchair.
- Ensure your toilet seat is clean, especially in the sitting part.
- In doing transfers from wheelchair to other surfaces and vice versa, ensure that your buttocks do not hit the wheels.
- If you travelling by car, auto or bus, especially in summer, be careful not sit on the rexin cushion seats. Place a towel or bed sheet or a cushion and then sit. Else, the accumulated heat on the rexin cushion seats can affect skin quality.
- If you travel long distances, do push ups more frequently and try and lie down to relieve pressure for at least ten minutes every eight hours.
- If you travelling by train, be in prone position as much as possible.

Bathing & Grooming

- Most important is to take bath every day and apply a dash of coconut oil every day to body parts vulnerable to pressure and dryness.
- Checking the temperature of bath/shower water before using.
- Use clothing and footwear that will not cause pressure marks.
- Clothing must always be loose and free of studs and thick seams.
- Ensure that your trousers, tracks and shorts do not have any buttons on the backside, as they would be a pressure point.
- If you are not managing your waistline in a disciplined way, ensure that your trousers are of comfortable size, as otherwise the buckles can cause skin abrasion.
- In winters, especially, ensure your skin does become dry due to the chillness. Coconut oil will serve the purpose best.
- Do not apply any hot oil or electric gadgets, especially on areas where you have no or limited sensation.
- Cut your finger nails at least once a week, say every Saturday. This is important to avoid damage by scratching, during digital evacuation of stools and applying needless pressure while doing work.
- Cut your toenails at least once in 15 days, as a nail break can be harmful and take much time to fix.

- Every time you take off your callipers, it is important to run a check on the skin.
- If any part of your calliper is damaged, get it immediately rectified before using; else a damaged calliper can cause a variety of problems.

What to Avoid

- Avoid long fingernails and toenails, tight shoes, wet clothes and car seats being too hot.
- Never remain in wet clothing.
- Never turn hot-water tap on when in the bath.
- Never sit or lie on wrinkled surfaces.
- Never use a hot water bottle.
- Never place hot food items on your lap to eat.
- Never assume that what suits others will suit you.
- Never leave even a minor sign of pressure unattended.
- Beware of car heaters, fires or any other heat giving appliance, exposed hot pipes.

General

- Remember barring the three rehabilitation centers in Vellore, Delhi, Pune and the PMR Department of St John's Bangalore, knowledge of musts-do skin care routines and efficient pressure sore treatment for spinal injured persons is scarce.
- Take note of the practices set out by the pioneer of rehabilitation in India, Dr Mary Verghese.
- Call the The Spinal Foundation Toll Free Number for an informed discussion and possible guidance.
- o consult a doctor to get suggestions/advice specific to you.

DOs by Dr Mary Verghese

Constant vigilance! watchword of the paraplegic.

Day after day, week after week, year after year, for as long as one should live, the patient, exacting ritual:

- ✓ examining the body thoroughly for reddened areas
- ✓ using a hand mirror for back, hips, heels, and elbows
- ✓ bathing daily with warm water and soap
- ✓ then rubbing lightly over paralyzed parts
- ✓ applying powder when the skin was dry
- ✓ using foam rubber pads to keep pressure off any part that showed signs of redness
- ✓ making sure that no part was subjected to pressure for more than an hour
- ✓ keeping the skin dry
- ✓ treating every slightest abrasion as if it were a mortal wound.

Monotonous, time consuming routines, but for the paraplegic, a matter of life or death!

Source: Take My Hands, The Remarkable Story of Dr Mary Verghese, a biography by Dorothy Clarke Wilson

Dealing with Pressure Sores

- If you become run down, ill, depressed or worried, your skin will be more likely to suffer damage. Please take extra care in such circumstances.
- If you notice redness of the skin (grade 1 pressure sore), give complete pressure relief to that area until the redness subsides.
- If you sit with a patch of skin that is red or broken, it will quickly develop into a pressure sore, which will need a long time to heal (anywhere between a month and a year)
- If a pressure sore does not heal within a month with clean dressing and complete pressure relief, chances are that the sore is deep or there are other reasons preventing the healing. Meet an informed doctor.
- Do not sit with a pressure sore as you will cause several days of damage for every one-hour of sitting.
- If you try and sit and work with a pressure sore, as time goes by, you will need a longer break for healing.
- Always remember that an unhealed pressure sore can get septic, cancerous and be life threatening.

Sitting after a healed bed sore

If for some reason, you have a pressure sore and due to good care, it has healed well and new skin has appeared, you cannot start sitting as usual. Follow this 10-day process to ensure quality healing:

Day # 1 sit for five minutes and check if skin has withstood the pressure (this check must be repeated every day and after resumption of sitting for longer hours).

Day # 2 sit for ten minutes.

Day # 3 sit for 15 minutes with a push up after 10 minutes.

Day # 4 Sit for 30 minutes with a push up every 10 minutes.

Day # 5: Sit for 60 minutes with a push up every 10 minutes.

Day # 6: Sit for 90 minutes with a push up every 10 minutes.

Day # 7 Sit for two hours with a push up every 10 minutes.

Day # 8 Sit for two-and-half hours with a push up every 10 minutes.

Day # 9 Sit for three hours with a push up every 10 minutes.

Day # 10 Sit for longer hours with a push up every 10 minutes.

If at any stage, skin appears to break or shows redness, stop the sitting process and go back to complete pressure relief till there is complete healing.

Note: This is only a draft-stage document of The Spinal Foundation and we would like your feedback based on your experience. Please email to spinalcareindia@gmail.com or inform by calling Toll Free 1800 425 1210.