

## Why?

The aim of this revised guide is to provide up to date information regarding the risk of developing a pressure ulcer through sitting for long periods of time.

### The Science bit

A pressure ulcer is an injury to the skin and/or underlying tissue usually over a bony prominence.

Sitting for long periods of time increases the risk of a pressure ulcer developing. This is due to soft tissue in the buttock area being squashed between the seat and the bony bits of the bottom, leading to skin damage. Some pressure ulcers develop quickly and others take longer, so it is important to know the risks.

Each year 700,000 people are affected, costing the NHS £3.8 million per day.

## Useful Resources

- Society of Tissue Viability [societyoftissueviability.org](https://societyoftissueviability.org)
- NHS Choices [nhs.uk/pages/home.aspx](https://nhs.uk/pages/home.aspx)
- NICE Guidelines for the public (cg179) [nice.org.uk/guidance/cg179](https://nice.org.uk/guidance/cg179)

Stephens, M., Bartley, C.A, Chester Bessell, D.S, Greenwood, C., Marshall, A., Neill, S., Rooney, S., Rose, S., Scattergood, S A., Worsley, P.R. (2025) Understanding the association between pressure ulcers and sitting in adults: What does it mean for all of us? Seating guidelines for people, carers and health and social care professionals. Society of Tissue Viability: Leeds UK

E: [support@societyoftissueviability.org](mailto:support@societyoftissueviability.org)  
W: [societyoftissueviability.org](https://societyoftissueviability.org)

Understanding the  
association between  
pressure ulcers and  
sitting in adults  
**What does it mean for  
all of us?**

# Seating guidelines “at a glance”

for people, carers and  
health & social care  
professionals

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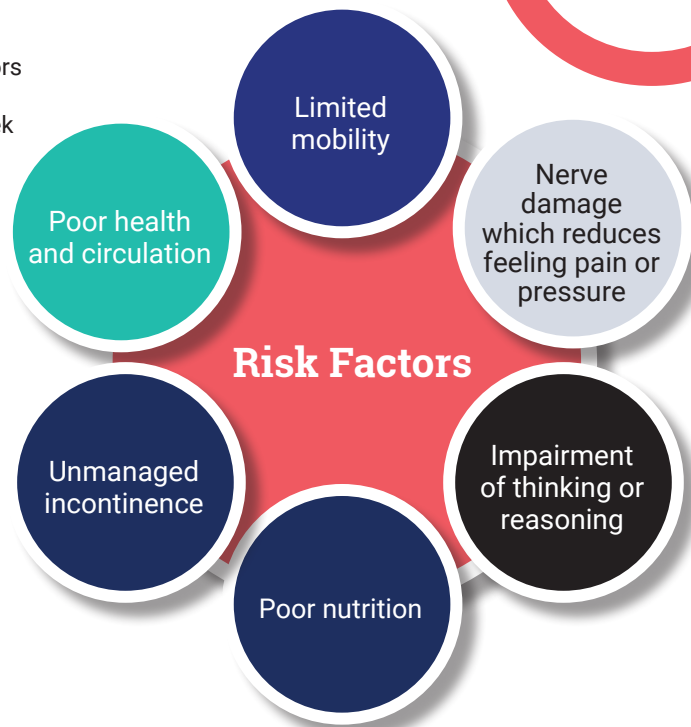
View the  
full guidelines



SCAN ME

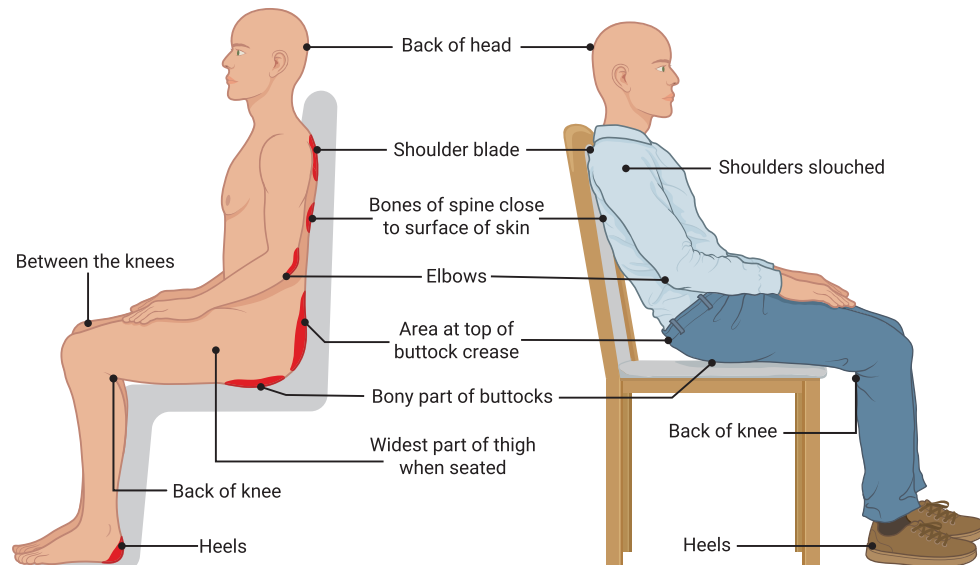
## Am I at risk?

Being aware of risk factors in sitting, will help to decide if you need to seek professional advice and equipment.



## Where do pressure ulcers develop when seated?

Areas at risk of pressure ulcer damage when seated and areas at risk of pressure ulcer damage when seated slouched in the chair.



## Getting the right chair/wheelchair

Essential factors that should be considered before choosing a chair

- Seat width
- Seat height
- Seat depth
- Chair back rest
- Chair seat to back angle
- Chair leg rests/foot supports
- Foot plate
- Head support
- Chair arm rests

### Who can help?

Getting the right chair/wheelchair can be complex. Trained individuals can carry out a comprehensive assessment of needs which includes:

#### The person

- Past medical history
- Current health status (physical & mental)
- Pressure ulcer history/risk assessment
- Body size and proportions
- Ability to transfer/mobilise/pressure relieve
- Level of independence
- Nutrition
- Medication
- Continence
- Opinions, life style and preferences

#### The chair/cushion

- Type
- Size
- Hours to be spent in the chair
- Temperature and humidity when seated
- Interface Pressure Mapping
- Function of the chair
- Additional supports
- Material
- Durability

## Seating assessment

#### Carer

- Adjustability of the chair
- Manoeuvrability
- Easy to maintain and clean
- Ability to position person in the chair
- Opinion

#### Other

- Risk assessment: environment, person & carer
- What is the chair to be used for?
- Environmental aspects: size of the room, doorway width, room temperature
- Motivation to use the chair
- Occupations
- Aesthetics (look of the chair)
- Cost

## Self-help suggestions - Six actions to reduce risk:

- 1. Skin** – inspect 'at risk areas' regularly throughout the day.
- 2. Surface** – getting the right seating equipment and using it correctly.
- 3. Keep moving** – change position at regular intervals.
- 4. Incontinence** – advice can be sought on the use of appropriate creams, pads, pants and other equipment from your GP/Practice Nurse.
- 5. Nutrition** – a well-balanced diet and fluid intake is essential. [nhs.uk/Livewell/Goodfood/Pages/the-eatwell-guide.aspx](https://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Goodfood/Pages/the-eatwell-guide.aspx)

- 6. Sickness** – It is important to maintain a healthy lifestyle as becoming generally unwell increases the chance of developing a pressure ulcer.



Equipment such as hoist slings, catheter, leg bags and belts can increase risk if used inappropriately. Footstools should not be used.