Easing the pressure on patients

Specialist nurses from South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust are aiming to raise awareness of how patients and carers can help to prevent pressure ulcers.

They will be at Asda, at the Metrocentre, Morrisons, at Seaburn, and The Galleries, Washington, from 11am to 3pm, on Stop Pressure Ulcer Day - Thursday, November 21st.

Judith Young, one of the Trust’s tissue viability specialist nurses, said: “Our healthcare teams in the community in Gateshead, South Tyneside and Sunderland and at South Tyneside District Hospital discuss with patients the best way to prevent pressure ulcers, based on their individual circumstances. But there are also some simple prevention measures which patients and carers themselves can follow and we want to use Stop Pressure Ulcer Day to get this information out to the public.”

The ulcers are caused by sustained pressure being placed on a particular part of the body, which interrupts the blood supply to the affected area of skin. Blood contains oxygen and other nutrients that are needed to help keep tissue healthy. The lack of blood supply also means that the skin no longer receives infection-fighting white blood cells and once an ulcer has developed, it can become infected by bacteria. Factors that increase the risk of developing pressure ulcers include: mobility problems; poor nutrition; an underlying health problem that disrupts your blood supply or makes your skin more vulnerable to injury and damage; being over the age of 70 and incontinence.

Steps to help prevent pressure ulcers include:

Changing position: Making regular and frequent changes to your position is one of the most effective ways of preventing pressure ulcers. If a pressure ulcer has already developed, regularly changing position will help to avoid putting further pressure on it and give the wound the best chance of healing.

Nutrition: For your skin to remain healthy, it requires nutrients that can only be supplied by eating a nutritious diet. Eating a healthy, balanced diet that contains an adequate amount of protein and
a good variety of vitamins and minerals can help prevent skin damage and speed up the healing process.

**Checking your skin:** If you have known risk factors for pressure ulcers, it is important that you check your skin on a daily basis for any signs, such as discoloured areas. This is particularly important if you have an underlying condition, such as nerve damage or diabetes. If you notice any damage contact your GP or community nurse or, if you are in hospital or a nursing home, inform one of your nurses or carers.

**Quit smoking:** If you are a smoker, giving up is one of the most effective ways of preventing pressure ulcers. Smoking reduces the levels of oxygen in your blood. It also weakens your immune system, which increases your risk of developing pressure ulcers.

The specialist nurse will have Stop Pressure Ulcer Day stands at Asda, at the Metrocentre; Morrisons, at Seaburn, and The Galleries, Washington, from 11am to 3pm, on Stop Pressure Ulcer Day, Thursday, November 21st.

**ends**

Pictured above: The first picture shows South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust’s tissue viability nurses, back row, left to right, Janette Milne, Karen Lowes and Judith Young; front row, left to right, Karen Reay and Emma Openshaw. The second, with the Stop Pressure Ulcer Day posters, shows, left to right, Janette Milne, Karen Lowes, Karen Reay, Emma Openshaw and Judith Young.

Issued on behalf of South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust by Kay Jordan
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