Reduce Pressure Ulcers
Leadership Fact Sheet
December 28, 2016

This fact sheet is about reducing pressure ulcers.

Why is reducing pressure ulcers important?
A pressure ulcer or bed sore is an injury to the skin caused by constant pressure over a bony area which reduces the blood supply to the area. Pressure can be caused by the resident lying too long in one position or by tubing or devices that press on the skin. Pressure ulcers can be dangerous and painful for a resident, in part because broken skin can introduce infection into the body. If untreated, pressure ulcers can deepen to the point where they expose the bone. Deeper ulcers may be hard to heal or may not heal at all. Sometimes, pressure ulcers can lead to serious medical complications and even death. Even if pressure ulcers heal, the skin never returns to normal and will be at higher risk for future pressure ulcers.

The presence of pressure ulcers limits the quality of life for a resident as evidenced by:
- Decrease in bowel and bladder function
- More incontinence
- Decrease in ability to move without help
- Decrease in mental capacity
- Increase in pain
- Increased risk for infection
- Less participation in activities

Proven techniques can reduce and almost eliminate this uncomfortable and potentially dangerous condition. The National Nursing Home Quality Improvement Campaign goal is that “nursing home residents receive early detection and interventions to eliminate the occurrence and reduce the severity of pressure ulcers in this vulnerable population.

How does pressure ulcer reduction benefit nursing homes?
- Nursing homes provide higher quality of care when they implement assessment and management techniques for pressure ulcers.
- Nursing homes have less cost associated with dressing supplies for pressure ulcers.
- Nursing homes have a better image in the community due to satisfied residents, families, and staff.
- Nursing homes have more successful surveys, improved quality measures and a better overall rating by CMS and consumers.

How can nursing home leadership help reduce pressure ulcers?
- Provide educational opportunities for all staff regarding pressure ulcer prevention.
- Provide ongoing educational programs regarding pressure ulcer risk, prevention and treatment for clinical staff.
- Provide education for all staff regarding the role they play in reducing pressure ulcers.
- Provide education for patients and families regarding pressure ulcer prevention and the quality improvement program you’ve put in place.
- Promote communication and teamwork among all levels of staff.
- Recognize staff who excel at pressure ulcer prevention.
- Recognize staff who excel at communication and teamwork to improve quality of care.
- Generate excitement about pressure ulcer reduction (eg., team competition, prizes for innovation, staff recognition, etc.).