



- + • Medical Issues in Abuse/Neglect Cases:
○ Pressure Ulcers

Candace Heisler, JD

APSIL

This webinar is sponsored by the Adult Protective Services Program at the Illinois Department on Aging under a grant awarded by the Administration on Community Living.

Trained case workers at local provider agencies conduct investigations and provide support in resolving reports of abuse, neglect, financial exploitation, or self-neglect involving adults with disabilities (age 18 – 59) and other older adults (age 60+) living in community-based (non-institutional settings).



Disclaimer

- This presentation is provided for general information purposes only and does not constitute legal or professional advice.
- The views expressed in this presentation are those of the speaker and may not necessarily represent the policy interpretations and procedures issued by the Adult Protective Services Program at the Department on Aging.

Session Objectives

- Understand the causes of pressure ulcers
- Describe how to document pressure ulcers in abuse and neglect cases





WARNING

This presentation contains graphic images that may be disturbing to some viewers.



Neglect and Pressure Ulcers

- Elder Abuse Guide for Law Enforcement (EAGLE) Video, Elder Justice Initiative
- Montgomery County, Maryland

Pressure Ulcers/Pressure Injuries

- Also called pressure sores or bedsores
- Injury affecting skin where there is friction and shearing usually due to prolonged surface contact with a bony prominence of the body (e.g., sacrum (tailbone), hip, and heels)

Possible Causes:

- Remaining immobile in a single position without repositioning or turning
- Extended use of bed restraints, oxygen mask, or other types of medical equipment that restrict blood supply in the affected area

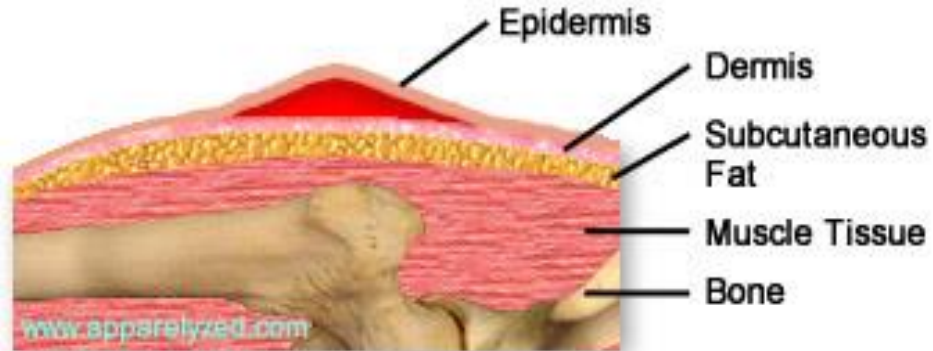
Pressure Ulcers Related to Immobility



Pressure Sores Overview

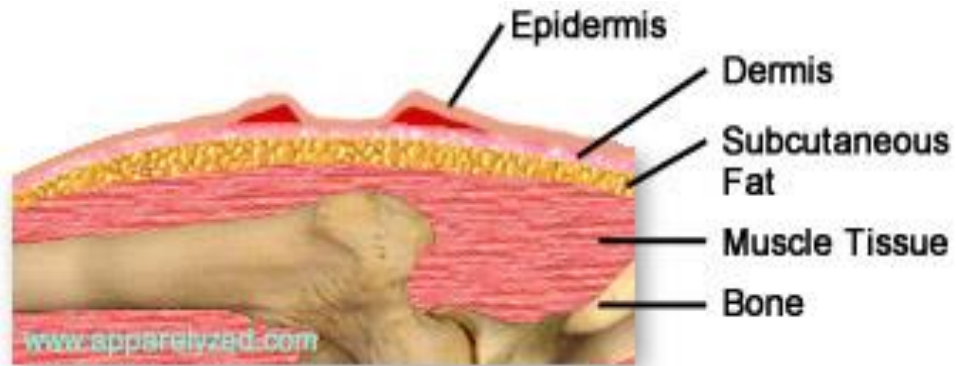
- Commonly associated with neglect by a caregiver
- Stages from 1 - 4, in increasing severity
- Some cannot be staged — unstageable
- Law enforcement's role is to document any injuries and assist victims in obtaining medical care when needed

Stage 1 Pressure Ulcer



- Intact skin with non-blanchable redness of a localized area usually over a bony prominence
- Area may be painful, firm, soft, warmer or cooler as compared to adjacent tissue
- May be difficult to detect in dark skin tones
 - May not have visible blanching
 - Color may differ from the surrounding area
- May indicate "at risk" persons

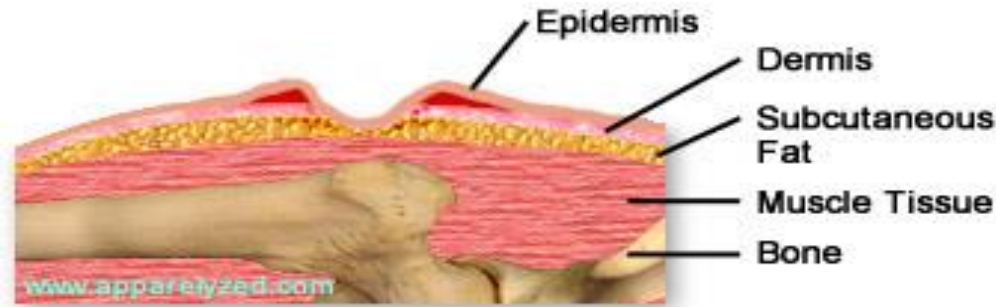
Stage 2 Pressure Ulcer



- Partial thickness tissue loss
- Presents as shiny or dry shallow open ulcer with a red or pink wound bed, without slough (dead tissue)
- May also present as an intact or open/ruptured serum-filled blister

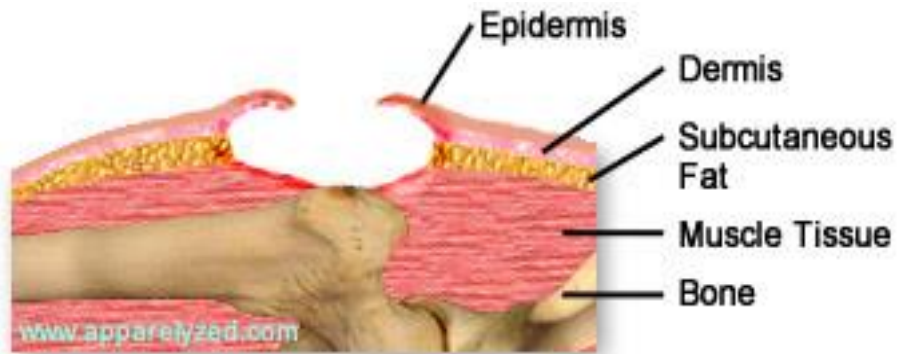


Stage 3 Pressure Ulcer



- Full thickness tissue loss
- Subcutaneous fat may be visible
- Bone, tendon, or muscle not exposed
- Slough may be present — does not obscure depth of tissue loss
- May include undermining and tunneling
- Depth varies by anatomical location

Stage 4 Pressure Ulcer



- Full thickness tissue loss with exposed bone, tendon, or muscle
- Slough or eschar may be present on some parts of the wound bed
- Often includes undermining and tunneling
- Can extend into muscle and/or supporting structures making osteomyelitis possible
- Depth varies by anatomical location
- Exposed bone/tendon is visible or directly palpable

Unstageable Pressure Ulcers



- Full thickness tissue loss
- Base of the ulcer is covered by slough (yellow, tan, gray, green, or brown coloring to dead tissue)



- Eschar in the wound bed (tan, brown, or black coloring to dead tissue)

Pressure Ulcers

- There is a risk of serious infection and even death in later stages.
- Once a wound is visible, prompt medical attention is needed.
- Stage 3 and 4 pressure ulcers can take months to years to heal.

A pressure ulcer alone is not sufficient evidence of neglect in a case.

How Long Does It Take to Get to Each Stage?

- Dependent on a person's overall health and nutrition, area of pressure, extent of pressure (e.g., prolonged), and underlying medical conditions
- Size and depth of an ulcer is related to its duration - size tends to increase over time

It is not possible to determine how long it may have taken for an ulcer to develop.

Estimated time for Stage 1: Hours

Estimated time for Stage 2: Hours to Days

Estimated time for Stage 3: Days to Weeks

Estimated time for Stage 4: Weeks to Months

What to Document for Pressure Ulcers



- Medical condition of person; underlying medical conditions
- Is person receiving appropriate nutrition and hydration?
- Are materials to reduce pressure and the risk of developing pressure ulcers in use?
- Number, location, and appearance of pressure ulcers
- Odors
- Presence of infection
- Has medical care been obtained? Is treatment plan being followed?
- Is person generally clean or dirty?
- Condition of the environment

Proving Neglect

- Victims of neglect typically have significant underlying medical conditions
- Some of those underlying conditions are so significant that even with good care pressure ulcers can develop
- In neglect cases, investigative questions about pressure ulcers include:
 - How many pressure ulcers are present? Their size and appearance. Are any infected?
 - Efforts to provide care, e.g., devices to help turn the victim, clothing compression socks, medication, etc.
 - Has medical treatment been sought? Is victim receiving care from visiting nurses or wound care specialists?



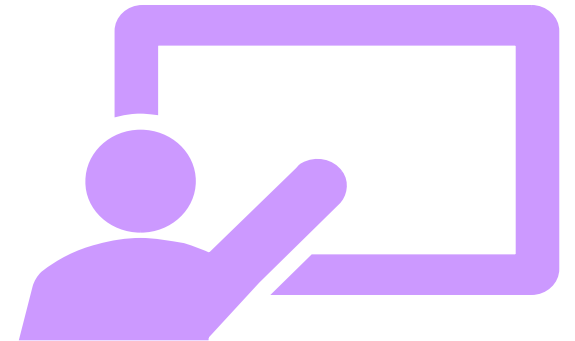
Summary

- Pressure ulcers can appear with good care.
- If present, has there been any effort to obtain professional care?
- Check for:
 - any underlying medical conditions
 - documentation about the development and progression of the ulcer
 - care plans for treatment of the wound

Other Presentations

Segments on:

- Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation of Older Adults and Adults with Disabilities
- Tips for Interviewing Older Adults and Adults with Disabilities: Overview
- Tips for Interviewing Older Adults and Adults with Disabilities: Rapport Building
- Medical Issues in Abuse/Neglect Cases: Bruising and Medications
- Medical Issues in Abuse/Neglect Case: Pressure Ulcers
- Capacity and consent
- Powers of Attorney
- Abuse Investigation Case Study



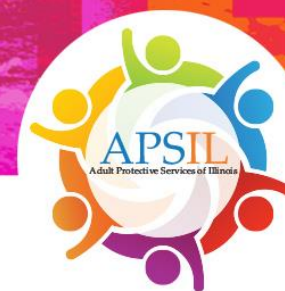
For More Information

To report abuse, call:

1-866-800-1409, Adult Protective Services Hotline (24-Hour)

Additional Resources:

- <https://www2.illinois.gov/aging/ProtectionAdvocacy/Pages/abuse.aspx>
- <https://www2.illinois.gov/aging/Engage/Pages/default.aspx>



**Thank you for the work you do
to investigate allegations of
abuse to protect older adults
and adults with disabilities!**