

# Pressure Cushions, Mattresses and Protectors

Pressure cushions, mattresses and protectors can assist in preventing the development of pressure areas and aid comfort. Pressure cushions alone will not remove the risk of developing pressure areas. They should be used in conjunction with other pressure management strategies, including regular position changes and good skin care.

Careful consideration of many factors relating to the client and their environment is necessary when selecting the right equipment to manage pressure care. It is best to seek advice from a health professional such as an Occupational Therapist, Physiotherapist or Registered Nurse to ensure that the correct equipment is obtained to meet the needs of an individual. Different materials are used for pressure cushions, mattresses and protectors. Some materials offer a high level of pressure reduction, whilst others provide less pressure reduction and may improve comfort only.

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## Commonly used materials are as follows:



### **SHEEPSKINS**

There are both natural and synthetic sheepskins for use in beds and on chairs. They offer comfort and can also be placed over rough surfaces to protect fragile skin. Sheepskin does not offer good pressure relief, so it is suitable for use with people at low risk of pressure areas only.



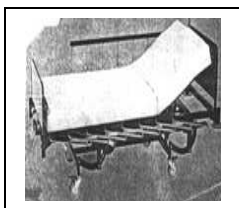
### **FOAM**

There are a variety of natural and synthetic foams available of different densities and styles; eg flat, egg crate, pinhole, gridded. Foam is easy to cut to shape to suit the user. It requires little maintenance but has a short lifespan. It is useful as an aid in comfort. Foam is best suited to people at low to medium risk of pressure areas.



### **FIBRE**

Natural or synthetic fibres can provide a cushioning effect in a mattress or a cushion. They require regular laundering and “fluffing-up” to maintain their degree of comfort. They provide a stable base, but flatten quickly under the user. Fibre products are generally suitable for people at low to medium risk of pressure areas.



### **WATER**

These types of cushions and mattresses are mostly used for comfort. They conform to the body's shape as the water displaces. They require minimal maintenance, but even a small cushion can be heavy to move. They are unsuitable for use in sitting as they are very unstable due to the continual dispersion of water. Generally, water cushions are suitable for use by a person

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at low to medium risk of pressure areas.



### **GEL**

There are a number of types of gel and different ways for it to be contained in the cushion. Each will conform in different ways to the user's shape. Gel can be useful to absorb vibration and is generally quite stable.

According to the type selected, a gel cushion can suit people at low, medium and occasionally high risk of pressure areas.



### **FLUID**

There is a range of new fluids, which are neither gel nor water and have many different pressure relieving properties. These fluids are usually used in combination with other materials within a cushion or mattress.

Depending on the type of cushion chosen, they can be suitable for people at low, medium or high risk of pressure areas.



### **AIR/ALTERNATING AIR**

These may have one, a few, or many air chambers in a cushion or mattress, and are lightweight. They work on the principal that the user will be suspended or "floating" on the air cells. The lowest air pressure needed to lift the person clear of surface contact is usually the principle used for inflation. Daily checks for the correct inflation level is recommended.

There is risk of a puncture and many styles do not offer the stability some users require. The air in these mattresses can be static or alternating. An alternating air mattress is connected to a motorised pump which constantly changes the pressure in the different chambers of the mattress.

Depending on the type chosen, they are suitable for people at low, medium or high risk or pressure areas.



### **COMBINATION**

Some cushions and mattresses combine two or more materials to obtain the properties of each in the product. Common combinations include foam and fluid, foam and air, gel and air and gel and foam.

### **NEED TO KNOW MORE?**

Telephone, fax or e-mail your enquiry to obtain further information from one of the therapists about products. Alternatively, you can make an appointment to trial the equipment at our display centres or through our outreach service. Please phone LifeTec for further details.

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