

The Polyair Cushion (page 1 of 5)

Why do I need a Polyair cushion?

Your injury means that you may easily develop pressure marks and ulcers. You have been assessed as needing a specialist cushion to reduce the chance of this happening.

Your Polyair Cushion



If you need your information in another language or medium (audio, large print, etc) please contact Customer Care on 0800 374 208 or send an email to: customercare@salisbury.nhs.uk

You are entitled to a copy of any letter we write about you. Please ask if you want one when you come to the hospital.

Please complete The Friends & Family Test to tell us about your experience at: www.salisbury.nhs.uk/FriendsFamily or download our App from the Apple App store or Google Play Store.

The evidence used in the preparation of this leaflet is available on request. Please email: patient.information@salisbury.nhs.uk if you would like a reference list.

Name: Matt Fiddy
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Polyair cushions are air-filled pressure relieving cushions made from synthetic rubber. They are adjusted by air valves at the front of the cushion. An outer cover is provided to protect the cushion.

There are different types of Polyair cushions, but all are similar in construction. Due to muscle bulk loss around the seating bones, spinally injured patients are recommended to use the 100cm height version.

The Spinal Centre uses the dual valve cushion which gives stability and some postural assistance as it provides side-to-side support.

Due to variations in the cushion range, we advise you not to use a different type of Polyair cushion until you have been assessed for its use.

Please contact the staff at the Pressure Clinic who will be able to help.

Before use

The Polyair cushion is designed to be used with the outer cover for maximum efficiency.

The cushion is supplied in a box which you should keep as you may need to return the cushion if there are any problems with it.

Hold the cushion by the edges not the cells, as these can easily be punctured or repairs weakened. Do not carry the cushion by any of the air valves.

The outer cover has a carry handle at the front.

A pump and a puncture repair kit should be provided. Do not use any other type of pump as this will damage your cushion.

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We advise you to use the official outer cover at all times.

Always replace worn or damaged covers.

Replacement covers are available from your wheelchair service or the cushion's supplier.

Daily checks

You need to check the cushion every day.

- If someone else is doing this for you, you will need to tell them how to do it and make sure that they do as you have told them.
- It is best not to wear a watch or rings with stones when checking the cushion as these can puncture the air cells. Long finger nails can also cause punctures.
- Remove the cover and check the cushion for damage.
- Check that the air valves are not damaged, the cushion is inflated and there are no visible punctures (see page 4).
- Check the base of the air cells for signs of deterioration including discoloured patches or cracks in the rubber, and that nothing has dropped down between the air cells.
- Ensure the air valves are visible through the outer cover (see picture below).

Adjusting the cushion



The main inflation valves are at the front of the cushion. These do not need adjusting manually. Do not insert objects into the valves as this will allow air to escape and affect the inflation level.

The cushion must be adjusted to suit your individual needs. You should sit suspended "in" the cushion and not "on" top of it.

A hand-held electronic pressure gauge/pump is used to inflate and adjust the cushion to the correct inflation level. This clips easily onto the air valve.

The pressure gauge is a precision instrument and should be handled with care.

Ensure the gauge is connected securely to the air valve. A firm click will confirm it is attached. Squeeze the sides of the connection end to remove it from the air valve.

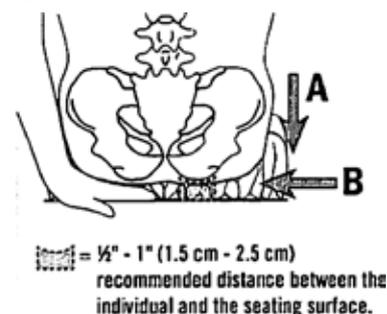
Take care when attaching or removing the connectors.

The setting of the pressure gauge is determined by your weight and body dimensions.

The handset will switch off automatically if not used after 2 minutes.

The AAA sized batteries are easily replaceable.

The Pressure Clinic recommends checking the cushion is correctly inflated by hand testing as you have been shown. The cushion works best when there is ½ to 1 inch (1.5 - 2.5cm) of air between the cushion base and the lowest bony part of your bottom.



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For more information on how to set up and adjust your cushion please refer to the following webpage: www.sumed.co.uk/uploads/media_items/polyair-user-guide-v2.original.pdf

An under or over-inflated cushion can cause skin marking and development of pressure ulcers. We recommend that the air inflation is checked every 1-2 weeks.

If you have any queries about adjusting your Polyair cushion, you can contact the Pressure Clinic or your local wheelchair service for advice.

For patients admitted to the Spinal Centre, all types of Polyair cushions should only be adjusted by the Pressure Clinic staff. If in doubt please contact the Pressure Clinic on ext. 4291, and do not use the cushion until the matter has been resolved.

Using the cushion

We advise you not to store items under or to the side of your cushion as this could create a higher seating pressure. Sharp objects may puncture the air cells. Should this happen you must contact your wheelchair service or your cushion supplier immediately.

The cushion user must be aware of other factors that can cause punctures. These include:

- hot cigarette ash, matches or cigarette lighters
- pets
- keys kept under or around the cushion
- sharp objects.

Exposing the cushion to extreme heat, such as direct sunlight, open fires or radiators can perish the rubber.

The maximum user weight for the Polyair cushion varies depending on cushion sizes.

The smallest size weight limit is 80kg / 175lbs. The largest size is 180kg / 400lbs.

Please refer to <http://www.sumed.co.uk/pressure-area-care/polyair> for more information about weight limits.

Your skin can be badly damaged if the cushion is not used properly.

Cleaning your cushion

Clean the cushion with warm water and detergent, making sure that the areas between the cells are clean. Anti-bacterial wipes can also be used.

Do not use strong substances such as bleach or alcohol-based products or lotions when cleaning your cushion.

Be careful when wiping dry between the air cells as any repaired areas may become dislodged from the cells. If possible always allow it to dry naturally.

The outer cover can be machine washed up to a 95°C wash cycle with mild detergent.

Do not use bleach. The cover should be drip-dried or tumble-dried on a cool setting to prevent shrinkage. Washing instructions are on the label. Do not dry clean or iron.

The cushion should be put the correct way inside the cover (and not back to front or upside down).

The outer cover has a carry handle at the front and a zipper at the back. The Polyair cushion has descriptive labels on the underside to enable correct positioning before using it.

The zipper opening must be placed at the back with the air valves still visible outside the cover.

Placing the complete assembled cushion the wrong way round can cause significant skin damage.

Punctures

If you suspect a puncture or your cushion deflates fully, over-inflate the cushion and place under water, with all valves closed. Tiny bubbles will show the puncture.

A puncture repair kit with repair instructions is provided with the cushion. If you need more sealant, or cannot repair the puncture, contact wheelchair services immediately.

If your cushion has a puncture, do not sit on it until it has been repaired. You are likely to develop skin ulcers if you sit on a punctured cushion.

Do not sit on an unrepaired Polyair cushion. You will put your skin at great risk of pressure ulcer development.

General information about the cushion

No latex has been used in making this product.

Travelling in an aeroplane will affect the pressure within the Polyair cushion, and over-inflate the air cells. You may need to let a little air out before take off. Always reset your cushion as soon as possible after landing.

This cushion must not be placed on a car seat, as sudden or sharp braking may cause you to slide off your cushion. The cushion will not maintain your balance when going round corners.

If you are travelling in your chair in a vehicle, always ensure that you are secured correctly with a harness.

Do not use an alternative cover on the cushion such as a pillow case, as this will affect the efficiency of the cushion, and can cause skin marking.

Pressure relief

You may need to carry out pressure relief on this cushion. If you are not sure whether you need to do this, please contact the Pressure Clinic.

Pressure relief helps to keep the blood flowing in your seating area. This is necessary for healthy skin and helps to prevent ulcers from forming.

Pressure is relieved when the bony parts of your bottom are lifted clear from the cushion. To do this you can lift your bottom off the seat or lean from side to side or forward and then back. If possible relieve the pressure every 20 minutes for 20 seconds.

Skin

You should check your skin for any skin damage before getting into your wheelchair and on going back to bed. When in bed, if you have any red or pink marks on your skin, you will need to relieve pressure from the area until the mark has completely faded. If the mark is still there after 30 minutes, please contact the Pressure Clinic for advice.

New cushions are firmer than older ones, so you need to check your skin as often as possible when you get a new one.

Life expectancy of the cushion and how to replace it

The Polyair cushion should last between 3-5 years or longer if looked after and maintained properly, but this can vary depending on your weight and how active you are.

The cushion is guaranteed for 2 years to be free from manufacturing defects.

To repair or replace your cushion, contact your local wheelchair service or supplier.

How can the Pressure Clinic help?

We are available by telephone for advice, and you will also attend the Pressure Clinic during your Outpatient appointment to see your consultant.

Additional appointments can also be made for you to be seen in the Pressure Clinic should you so wish.

We can be contacted for addresses and telephone numbers of local wheelchair services, sales representatives for cushions, and for advice on any aspect of your pressure area care.

Pressure Clinic – Telephone : 01722 429291

Please remember that this information is only to be used as a guide and that each person needs to be individually assessed for a cushion. Once a cushion is prescribed it does not reduce the need for skin checking and continued assessment.