

Pressure Injury Staging Documentation Cheat Sheet

Reviewed by the BastionGPT Clinical Advisory Board · September 2026 · Reproduces no NPIAP definitions or images

Pressure injury staging classifies a pressure injury by the deepest tissue exposed or damaged: four numbered stages plus unstageable and deep tissue pressure injury, with mucosal injuries not staged; the NPIAP definitions and illustrations are copyrighted and not reproduced here. The stage never moves down as a wound heals, a nurse may stage but the provider must diagnose, and present on admission is defined at the inpatient admission order. Defensible charting names site and side, states one stage with its date, and ties POA to the admission inspection.

Location, laterality, and etiology one wound per entry

Do: name site and side on the body map; state the pressure or shear cause; rule out moisture damage and skin tears.

Pitfall: "sacral wound" with no side; incontinence dermatitis staged as a Stage 2 pressure injury.

Stage, date first identified, rater one stage or category, in plain words

Do: one stage or category with date, time, and rater; describe the depth you saw; mucosa gets no numeric stage.

Pitfall: a flowsheet stage with no provider diagnosis; a provider note with no site while three wounds are staged.

Present on admission defined at the admission order

Do: admission order time and inspection finding recorded; ED or transfer record cited; CMS sets no hour window.

Pitfall: "POA" charted on day four with no admission inspection behind it; a unit 24-hour rule written as a CMS rule.

Measurements and wound bed stated method, comparable next time

Do: length, width, depth by probe; undermining by clock face; tissue percentages adding to 100; exudate, edges, pain.

Pitfall: "about 3 cm, moderate depth"; percentages that add to 130; a wound bed described only as "see photo."

Device and mucosal qualifiers name the device; mucosa is not staged

Do: name the device, its fit, hours in place, and the action taken; write a mucosal site as not stageable.

Pitfall: "Stage 2, nasal septum" with a numeric stage on mucosa; a device injury with the device never named.

Photograph and consent supports the words, never replaces them

Do: chart date, time, ruler and identifier in frame, consent type, and storage; describe the wound in words too.

Pitfall: an undated, unlabeled image with no consent noted; "see photo" where the description should be.

Healing and the provider match stage stays; entries must agree

Do: progress by measurements, tissue, or a validated tool, stage unchanged; confirm the provider note matches.

Pitfall: "Stage 4, now Stage 2, improving"; a healing wound note beside a provider note still reading unstageable.

Before the note is signed

- ☐ Site, side, and etiology named
- ☐ One stage stated with date first identified
- ☐ Admission inspection time supports POA status
- ☐ Measurements by method, percentages total 100
- ☐ Device or mucosal qualifier recorded
- ☐ Photograph dated, consented, described in words
- ☐ Healing described, stage unchanged, provider agrees

Drafting with AI

Give it the facts: site and side, etiology, depth seen in plain words, first identification date and rater, admission order and inspection times, measurements, wound bed percentages, exudate, any device, photograph and consent, baseline values, and the provider's diagnosis.

"Draft pressure injury documentation: sacrum midline, Stage 3 first identified 09/09 at 15:10, admission order 14:35; today 3.4 by 2.3 by 0.7 cm, 85 percent granulation, small serous exudate; photo with written consent; attending note agrees; reassess 09/23."

Never paste patient-identifying information into consumer AI tools. BastionGPT is HIPAA-compliant with a signed BAA on every plan.

Depth sets the stage

deepest tissue exposed or damaged

Never reverse stage

healing shown by wound features

POA at admission order

no 24 or 48 hour rule

Nurse stages, provider diagnoses

entries must agree; query conflicts

Full guide and sample note:

bastiongpt.com/template/pressure-injury-staging

BastionGPT drafts complete pressure injury staging and POA documentation. Free 7-day trial.

Pressure Injury Staging Documentation Template

Copy or print for your practice · Adapt fields to your organization's, payer's and jurisdiction's documentation requirements. Contains no NPIAP stage definitions or illustrations.

Setting: _____ Patient (initials): _____ Date: _____ Clinician: _____

Location + laterality: _____ Stage or category + date first identified: _____

Location, laterality, and etiology

Anatomic site with side and body map reference · pressure or shear over a bony prominence or under a named device · look-alikes ruled out: moisture damage, skin tear, arterial, venous, or diabetic ulcer

Stage or category and date first identified

One stage (1 to 4), unstageable, deep tissue pressure injury, or mucosal not stageable · depth in plain words · date, time, and rater at first identification · stage unchanged since then

Present on admission determination

Present at the time of the inpatient admission order, or not, or undetermined by the provider · admission order time · admission skin inspection time and finding · ED or transfer record · dated photograph as evidence

Measurements and wound description

Length head to toe, width perpendicular, depth by probe, in cm · undermining and tunneling by clock position · wound bed tissue percentages adding to 100 · exudate amount, type, odor · edges · periwound · pain score

Device or mucosal qualifier

Device named with fit, hours in place, and action taken · mucosal site documented as a pressure injury with no numeric stage · or none applies

Photograph and consent

Taken or not · date and time · ruler and patient identifier in frame · consent type per policy and state law · storage location · written description stands beside the image

Healing, provider match, and plan

Improving, stalled, or deteriorating by wound characteristics or a validated tool, stage unchanged · provider note names the same wound, site, etiology, and POA status · dressing, offloading, nutrition · next reassessment date

Clinician (name and credentials): _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____