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## Subject: Flaps and Grafts

Post flap/graft patients have two important concerns relative to repositioning. First and most immediate is eliminating pressure and shear on the flap/graft (surgical site) to allow the flap/graft to stabilize (typically 4-6 weeks of total off-loading or as dictated by the surgeon). Second but equally crucial is minimizing the risk of skin breakdown on the intact turning surfaces—which are exposed to longer periods of pressure loading because the surgical site [previous pressure injury (ulcer)] cannot be weight-bearing for several weeks.<sup>1</sup>

Therefore:

- For best outcomes, we recommend use of PressureGuard Easy Air® and powered Custom Care Convertible LAL products when available, used with microclimate management (“Air Flow”) mode “On”, and therapy mode “Float” selected to minimize possibility of tension on the incision. The lowest appropriate comfort setting should be used.
- Follow general NPUAP guidelines for wound healing, which recommend complete removal of pressure from wound site via positioning when possible.<sup>2</sup>
- In the absence of Easy Air or Custom Care Convertible LAL products, or availability of other specialty surfaces including air fluidized, other Span-America air therapy surfaces may be used post-flap with patient positioned off the ulcer site and with care taken to minimize pulling or tension on the incision.


If the patient has a flap or graft that is less than 4 weeks post-op, total off-loading (proning) or air fluidized therapy is recommended.

### References:

<sup>1</sup>Fleck, C. et al. *Use of Alternatives to Air-Fluidized Support Surfaces in the Care of Complex Wounds in Post Flap and Post Graft Patients.* J Am Col Certif Wound Spec 2010; 2(1): 4-8

<sup>2</sup>International Guideline: Prevention and Treatment of Pressure Ulcers: Clinical Practice Guideline (NPAUP/EPUAP), 2009 – Excerpts below:

- NPUAP guidelines for Support Surfaces for Prevention/Treatment of Pressure Ulcers states the following:  
“Do not position an individual directly on a pressure ulcer (SOE = C). Select a support surface that meets the individual’s needs. Consider the following factors: Number, severity and location of the pressure ulcer(s), risk of additional pressure ulcers, need for additional features such as the ability to control moisture, temperature and friction/shear” (SOE = C)
- NPUAP guidelines for post-op (flap or graft) say the following:  
“Maintain the individual on an intensive pressure-redistribution system that reduces shear and pressure on the operative site, limits tension on the incision(s) and controls microclimate. Do not elevate the head of the bed or move the person from the bed without explicit approval from the surgeon” (SOE = C)



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