

## OASIS Alert

### Reader Question: Get Straight on Reverse Staging

Question: I know that Stage 3 and 4 pressure ulcers never heal and should always be reported at their worst stage, but what about Stage 2 pressure ulcers?

Answer: Reverse staging a healing pressure is never appropriate, no matter the stage. The **Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services** points to the **Wound Ostomy Continence Nurses Society** (WOCN) for the final word on staging pressure ulcers, and this organization has long held that reverse staging is inappropriate.

In a position statement on pressure ulcer staging, the WOCN clearly indicates that it doesn't support down-staging or reverse staging of granulating pressure ulcers. This is because the full-thickness repair process pressure ulcers go through involves replacing lost normal tissue with granulation tissue.

Also of note: In the response-specific instructions for OASIS item M1307 -- The Oldest Non-epithelialized Stage II Pressure Ulcer that is present at discharge, CMS advises "Do not reverse stage pressure ulcers."

The WOCN position statement includes the following scenario: A granulating Stage 4 pressure ulcer should not be "down-staged" to a Stage 3, because a Stage 3 pressure ulcer, by definition, is one with exposed subcutaneous tissue. Instead, it's more appropriate to report a granulating Stage 4 pressure ulcer as a "granulating Stage 4" or "healing Stage 4."

When the Stage 4 pressure ulcer is completely healed, it can be classified as a "healed Stage 4," which indicates that the pressure ulcer is now filled with granulation tissue and resurfaced with epithelium, the WOCN advises.

Bottom line: Stage 1 and Stage 2 pressure ulcers can heal, but should always be reported at their worst stage until healed. Stage 3 and Stage 4 pressure ulcers close, but do not heal, and should also be reported at their worst stage.