

Seating and Postural Support

During this time we need to be monitoring our young adults seating positioning and posture day and night to ensure they remain safe and comfortable. Individuals with movement difficulties and muscle weakness, particularly if they have difficulty in changing their own position, are at risk of their posture and body shape changing. This can affect their breathing and engagement in day to day activities.

Guidelines:

- Check in with the individual and let them tell you if they feel comfortable, listen to them, observe their body language and note their facial expressions.
- Check the individual's temperature as using equipment may make them feel warmer.
- To reduce the risk of pressure injuries it is important for the individual to reposition at least every 3 hours whether it's a movement break or it is a change from chair to bed.
- If you feel there is a safety concerns relating to the individual's specialist seating and/or wheelchair please contact your borough's wheelchair services for support.
- If you feel you need further guidance or the individual requires further postural support please contact their occupational therapist.

Impacts of reduced movement and poor seating systems:

- Becoming stiff and sore, making it difficult to move your limbs.
- Experiencing muscle spasms and pain in your joints.
- Having difficulty with eating and drinking with a higher risk of choking (follow eating and drinking guidelines as provided by SaLT).
- Difficulty in communicating with others, especially if your head becomes slumped.
- Sluggish digestive system.
- Skin breakdown and pressure sores.

(NHS: Education for Scotland, 2020)

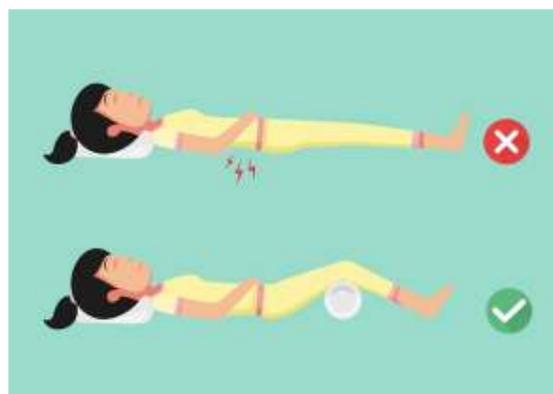
How to support an individual when laying down:

Lying flat:

The individual may be lying more than usual. If it is possible, have them lie with their head and chest elevated.

You can further support them by propping a pillow or two under their underarm to help them to lay straighter. This will help maximize their breathing.

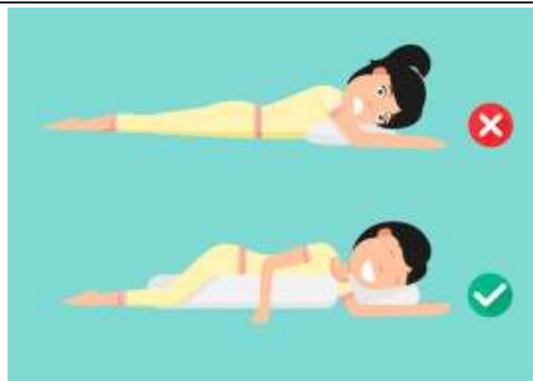
If they have tightness in the back of their legs impacting on their ability to lie straight, place a pillow or two under their knees.



(Image: Absolute Wellness Centre, 2019)

Lying on the side:

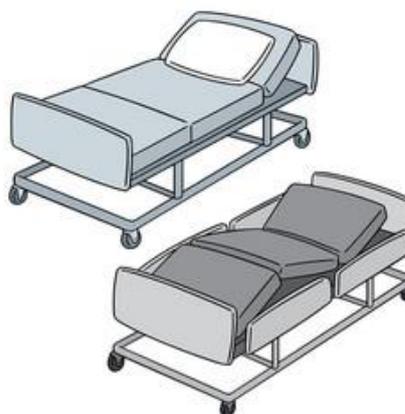
If they prefer to lay on their side, place a pillow between their knees. This will support their legs and stop them from being tight, stiff and rubbing on each other. This may reduce pain and discomfort having a positive impact on breathing.



(Image: Absolute Wellness Centre, 2019)

Hospital bed:

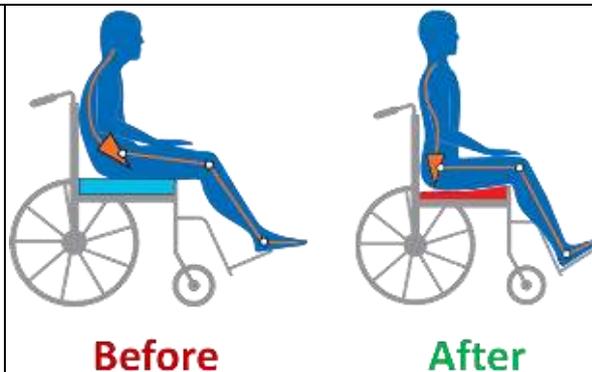
If the individual has a hospital bed, use the functions to raise their head, chest and support their knees.



How to support me when sitting:

Wheelchair:

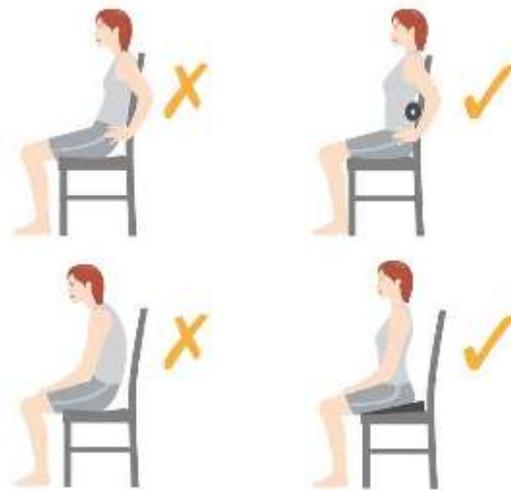
If the individual has a wheelchair, cushions, rolled towels, blankets and sausage pillows can help with repositioning.



(Image: Clipartkey, 2019)

Ordinary chair:

If they are using an ordinary chair, it's important for them to sit as upright as they can. Have their hips right at the back of the chair helping them sit up tall. If they are slumping forward or leaning to one side, put cushions or pillows under their underarm to help sit taller. This will help maximize their breathing, support their posture and ensure appropriate positioning for accessing their environment.



(Image: The Putney Clinic of Physical Therapy, 2020)

References

Absolute Wellness Centre. (2019). *Good Posture Series: Part 4 – How to Lie Down Properly*.
<https://www.awceugene.com/posture-laying/>

Clipartkey. (2019). *Use Pressure Redistribution Cushions For Correct Fit – Positioning Patient In Wheelchair*. https://www.clipartkey.com/view/ibmwTx_use-pressure-redistribution-cushions-for-correct-fit-positioning/

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The Putney Clinic of Physical Therapy. (2020). *GOOD POSTURE – SIT TALL*.
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