

24 hour Positioning and Movement

Supporting someone with a physical disability with complex needs can be challenging, particularly if the person is not able to move themselves independently or communicate how they're feeling.

The body moves thousands of times every day. Many regular movements are subconscious, and the full extent of stiffness or pain is often not felt until a position has been held for a long time. Think about how often you reposition yourself when in a meeting or while watching a movie.

Now consider the people you support with complex needs, who may not be able to reposition themselves or express discomfort. It is essential for everyone in the individual's support team to tune into their subtle changes and reactions during the day and overnight, to best understand their needs.

Supporting all positions and movement from as early an age as possible can help people's comfort and wellbeing and mean that people can participate in whatever way is best and enjoyable for them.

Positioning

When determining suitable positioning for an individual, it is important to consider their general health, comfort, pain levels, safety within their surroundings and participation in activities.

Everyone feels comfortable in different positions. The aim when providing positioning support is always a neutral body.

Postural supports can be helpful in ensuring a neutral position. Supports range from simple pillows purchased from a department store, through to customised pieces of equipment. While some people tolerate or want lots of pieces of equipment for support, others prefer just one or two pieces.



Regular consultation with the therapy team for postural supports and positioning can greatly enhance participation in activities. A 24-hour positioning plan can be useful for people who are supported by multiple support staff across the week. The therapy team can assist with putting together a plan that best meets the needs of the person.

24 hour Positioning and Movement cont.

Movement and Repositioning

Experiencing a range of movements and different positions across a 24-hour period is important for comfort and wellbeing.



Suggestions for providing optimum comfort to an individual with complex needs include:

- Make use of the recline and tilt in space functions on wheelchairs
- Regular re-positioning – make sure to re-position someone even when they “look comfortable”
- If they can, offer the opportunity to stand or walk
- For those who do not stand or walk, can they be hoisted into another seat or bed? Ask the therapy team to assess for alternative positions during the day. Always consider safety
- Encourage participation in exercises, stretching or other movement. Ask the therapy team for specific ideas and programs



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