Fit for Life

Independent Life

Seating & Positioning in Long Term Care – June 2016

The importance of good posture and appropriate seating for your residents

While you are at your next staff meeting take note of the number of times that you all reposition yourself in your chair to be as comfortable as possible.

Now think about your residents who are unable to reposition themselves and you will start to have an understanding of the importance of posture and seating for this population.

There are four essential things that an individual gets when sitting that are provided from good posture and appropriate seating

1. Comfort - To align joints to prevent deformity/pain and to adapt to changes in the body
2. Stability - To maintain a stable base of support and to move around that base with ease
3. Function - Perform functional actions, sustain and recover from actions (balance)
4. Protection - Prevention of pressure ulcers and pressure sores

If these things are not in place problems occur.

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What are the most common risk factors associated with abnormal posture and inappropriate seating?

- Clients develop trunk and spine deformities such as Kyphosis/Lordosis and Scoliosis
- Development of pelvic abnormalities, hip flexion contractures
- Pressure Sores/Ulcers
- Reduction in Physiological functions
- Emotional well being and Health status
- Increased risk of Falls
- Reduction in functional ability - increase in dependency levels
- Increased need for specialised equipment and chairs

But we can support staff to help avoid these issues.

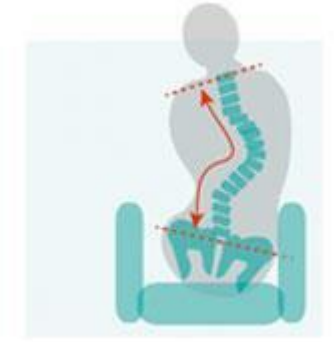
Factors that influence 'Good Posture' in a chair

Some of the main factors in attaining good posture are listed below with some of the effects of not having this in place.

- Seat Height - seating that is too high for a resident can compresses veins and nerves leading to varicose veins or numbness or pressure areas. Seating that is too low can compress internal organs or lead to hip flexion contractures.
- Seat width - seating that is too wide gives no lateral support and can lead to deformity development such as scoliosis. Seating that is too narrow can lead to pressure areas on bony prominences and possible shearing forces damaging tissue.
- Seat depth - Incorrect seat depth can lead to a posterior pelvic tilt which commonly leads to the residents constantly 'sliding' off the chair. It also contributes to a reduced capacity to stand and the development of kyphosed posture.
- Back rest - back of a chair should support the full curvature of the spine if it does not it will lead to back pain and deformities.

Seat too high *- pressure back of legs*

No back rest *support upper spine*



Seat depth incorrect *- 'sliding 'and kyphotic posture* ***Seat width -*** *too wide - Scoliosis*

What can you and your team do to help?

There are in fact many practical things that we can do to help reduce the negative effects of poor sitting posture and seating without costly interventions.

1. As a basic rule someone sitting in a chair regardless of their dependency level should have
    - Two feet **flat** on the ground (or foot rest)
    - 90 degree angle at the knee and hips
    - Support for the entire spine
    - 2 to 3 inches space on either side of the hips
2. Have a variety of armchairs of different height and depth and width available as one chair dimension is not suitable for everyone.
    - If all your chairs are the same height get some shortened (Maintenance)
    - If chairs are too deep use cushions to support lower back
    - If using pressure cushions be sure to use a **shorter** chair height

3. Never leave residents sitting in transit wheelchairs (non specialised) for any extended period of time.
4. If a resident is drowsy and falling asleep he/she should not be left in an armchair for an extended period of time
5. Regular repositioning

The benefits of correct posture and seating for your residents

- Reduced likelihood of developing irreversible deformities
- Reduced likelihood of specialised equipment use
- Reduction in the use of restraints
- Improved functional ability and independence levels
- Reduced risk of developing pressure areas
- Improved Physiological functions, digestive, respiratory
- Reduced likelihood of falls
- Reduced burden of care*

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We hope this information helps in some way but please feel free to contact us with questions or queries on any of the content. Click here if you would like to download a printable version of this newsletter or any of our previous newsletters.

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About us

Since 2001 Fit For Life has been empowering our adult and ageing population to remain as active and independent as possible to ensure that they achieve and maintain the best quality of life possible.

Fit For Life provide an extensive range of specialised training for healthcare professionals, therapists and carers to improve the care and wellbeing for the older adult and elderly population. Other services include, risk assessments, audits and reports, building and environment recommendations, and independent living services.

We pride ourselves on the team we have working with our older population and we are very excited to share our knowledge and expertise with you to ensure our older population receive bestpracticecare.

Some of the areas of specialised training we deliver include:

- Manual Handling – Mandatory, Refresher, and non-people manual handling courses
- Advanced Hoist and Sling Workshops
- Falls Prevention - Common Risk Factors, Falls Policy, System and Audits
- Group Exercise Delivery - Foundation Level, Dementia specific and advanced falls prevention
- Sitting posture, seating, positioning
- Pressure care and cushions
- Positioning and repositioning
- Transfers and Mobilising
- Stroke Positioning and Handling
- Restraints

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