



WHY IS POSITIONING IMPORTANT?

Changing the dependent patient's position at least every 2 hours accomplishes four things:

- a) **Contributes to the comfort of the patient;**
- b) **Relieves pressure on affected areas;**
- c) **Helps prevent formation of contractures or deformities; and**
- d) **Improves circulation.**

1- **Supine Position:** has many variations of degrees from flat to 60 degrees.



| Steps | Rationale | Other comments |
|--|--|--|
| 1. Place one pillow under the head and shoulders. | Hyperextension of the neck is prevented and alignment is maintained. | Older adults often suffer from kyphosis or have limited neck extension. The pillow helps support the neck in good alignment. |
| 2. One pillow is placed under the thigh to flex the knee slightly. | This decreases knee and hip extension and relaxes the lower back. | |
| 3. The heels are resting on the bed. | This can be tolerated for short periods of time without causing tissue damage. | Prolonged pressure on the heel is not recommended for periods over 30 minutes. |



- 2- **Supine Position Variation: Fowlers:** bed is raised approximately 45 degrees (up to 60 and 90 degrees) – semi-sitting position.(Fowler’s position is the position of choice for patients who have difficulty breathing or experiencing heart problems)



| Steps | Rationale | Other comments |
|---|--|--|
| 1. Place one pillow under the head and shoulders. | Hyperextension of the neck is prevented and alignment is maintained. | Older adults often suffer from kyphosis or have limited neck extension. The pillow helps support the neck in good alignment. |
| 2. Arms and wrists are supported on the bed parallel to the body or can be flexed and placed on the patients’s lap. | Both positions prevent muscle strain on the shoulders. | |



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| 3. One pillow is placed under the thigh to flex the knee slightly. | This decreases knee and hip extension and relaxes the lower back. Helps maintain a sitting position without sliding down the bed. Relieves some of the pressure on the heels. | |
| 4. Elevate bed slightly at the feet. | Avoids pressure on lower back and prevents patients from slipping down the bed which can cause shearing. | <i>Shearing occurs when the skeleton and deep fascia slides downward with gravity, while the skin and upper fascia remains in the original position. Deep necrosis can occur when the shearing between the two layers of tissue leads to stretching, kinking and tearing of vessels in the subcutaneous tissues.</i> |
| 5. The heels are resting on the bed. **You may notice that the feet are not supported in good alignment. | This can be tolerated for short periods of time without causing tissue damage. Prevents hyper-flexion of the feet. | <i>Prolonged pressure on the heel is not recommended for periods over 30 minutes.</i> A foot board or other supporting device is advisable to keep the foot in good alignment and prevent foot drop. |

3- Lateral Position:





| Steps | Rational | Other comments |
|---|--|---|
| 1. Place one pillow under the head and shoulders. | Hyperextension of the neck is prevented and alignment is maintained. | Older adults often suffer from kyphosis or have limited neck extension. The pillow helps support the neck in good alignment |
| 2. The left shoulder is pulled forward and the upper body, head, neck and torso are aligned properly. The left wrist is supported with a rolled towel. | Promotes good circulation to the extremity. Prevents lateral flexion and fatigue of the sternocleidomastoid muscles and internal rotation/ adduction of the shoulder. | |
| 3. A pillow is placed under the upper arm to place it in good alignment; arm should be flexed comfortably. | | |
| 4. A pillow is placed laterally under leg and thigh. The right leg is sharply flexed so that it does not rest on the lower leg. A pillow is positioned between the legs to maintain the position. | This ensures good alignment with the shoulders and hips. Maintains the position. | |



4- Positioning in a chair or wheelchair



- The knees (at a 90° angle with the hips) are slightly separated to provide relaxation and promote further alignment.
- Hips are positioned at midline of the chair seat with the pelvis stable.
- The back is supported forward in the chair so the back meets the hips at a 90° angle.
- The arms are flexed and supported by the arms on the chair.
- The head is positioned in midline of the body and is supported by the back of the chair.
- While sitting, the best posture to use is **'feet flat and a 90°/90°/90° position'**