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POSITIONING TRAINING

What is positioning? Positioning is how you help a person sit, lie down, or change position when they cannot move independently. Even people who can move by themselves may occasionally need help with positioning. The best positions for an individual depends on their body type, medical needs, equipment needs, skin condition, and level of comfort. Positioning is an essential practice needed to maintain good body alignment, reduces discomfort, and the probability of pressure ulcers in an individual that has impaired mobility and stability. Positioning, or placing a person in a steady posture, can also be used both to increase stability and to facilitate mobility. When positioning, supportive devices such as pillows, rolls, and blankets, along with repositioning, can aid in providing comfort and safety.

Why is positioning important? Since interruption to blood circulation can cause bed sores, maintaining circulation can prevent them. Repositioning helps an individual maintain proper blood circulation to all areas of the body - especially bony protrusions that are more likely to develop bed sores. Changing positions can relieve pressure and restore blood flow in the skin of the heels and ankles, backs of the calves, buttocks, hips, back, shoulder blades, elbows, and the back of the head. It is important for staff members to regularly reposition individuals who cannot maintain blood circulation on their own through activity or exercise. Moving and positioning also can help reduce swelling in an arm or leg, or prevent stiffness in a limb. Of equal importance is taking steps to assist the individual you support to be as mobile as possible. Mobility gives people the opportunity to socialize, be active and as independent as possible.

Food for thought:

Imagine you were unable to move or reposition yourself without help and could not communicate you were experiencing discomfort? How would it feel to be stuck in the same position for hours on end without a change of scenery? Pay attention to the person's facial expressions and moods. Often times simply repositioning can drastically alleviate discomfort and/or improve the mood of the individuals you support. A person's self-esteem depends on at least some independence in mobility.

Preparing to position/move:

First, it is important to explain to the individual what will happen and how they might be able to help. Doing this ensures the person is aware of what is happening and isn't startled. It also provides an opportunity for them to ask questions and help with the positioning if possible. Also, remember the principles of proper body mechanics to help prevent injury. Tighten your gluteal and abdominal muscles, bend at your knees, and keep your back straight and neutral.

Moving to one side of the bed if the person can assist:

1. Stand on the side to which you plan to move the individual.
2. Help the person bend their knees up and place their feet on the bed.
3. Help the individual to bridge (lift up their buttocks), and move their buttocks to the side of the bed.
4. Assist the person move their legs over, and then their head and upper body, by sliding your arms under them and gliding them toward you if they need help.
5. You can do this in stages to reach the desired position.

Moving to one side of the bed if the person is unable to assist:

1. Stand on the side to which you plan to move the person.
2. Ask the individual to fold their arms across their chest or do this for them if needed.
3. Slide both your hands under the person's head, neck, and shoulders and glide them toward you on your arms.
4. Slide your arms under the individual's hips and glide them toward you.
5. Slide your arms under their legs and glide them toward you.

Note: When lying on the back, place a foam pad or pillow under the legs, from mid-calf to the ankle, not directly behind the knees which could restrict blood flow. This will also keep pressure off the heels, another area prone to pressure sores.

Turning a person from supine (flat on back) to side-lying:

1. Help the individual bend their knees up one at a time and place their feet flat on the bed.
2. Place one hand on the person's shoulder farther away from you and the other hand on the hip farther from you.
3. On the count of 3, help the resident roll toward you.

Note:

- **Keep proper body alignment. Avoid the person lying directly on the hip-bones.**
- **Keep knees and ankles from touching by using small pillows or pads.**
- **Place a pillow behind the back for comfort and support.**
- **Ensure the arm on the bed is not stuck under the body.**

Moving a person from supine (flat on back) to sitting:

1. Help the individual roll onto their side facing you.
2. Reach under the person's head and put your hand under their shoulder (using your arm closer to the head of the bed). The resident's head should be supported by and resting on your forearm.
3. With your other hand, reach over and behind the resident's knee farther from you.
4. Using your legs and arms to do the lifting, bring the resident's head and trunk up as you swing their legs down to the sitting position. Hold the individual's legs, letting their knees rest in the crook of your elbow.

Note: Your arm behind the person's head and body must stay in contact with the resident once they are sitting up to prevent them from falling backward. Remember to stay directly in front of the resident so you can block them with your body if needed for safety.

Moving an individual from sitting to supine:

1. Place one hand behind the person's shoulder, and let their head and neck rest on your forearm. Place your other hand under their knees, and let their legs rest in the crook of your elbow. Position your arms as if you were carrying someone in front of you.
2. Use your legs to lift and breathe out as you help the individual lift their legs up onto the bed. Gently lower their trunk and head onto the bed.

Learning to move and position a person correctly makes sure both you and the person you support are comfortable and safe. An individual should be repositioned every two hours or per their service plan guidelines. Please ensure you are following these guidelines.