

Nondrug Pain and Symptom Management

POSITIONING

POSITIONING – assisting older adult to stay in/move to comfortable positions

- Enhances breathing and digestion
- Decreases risk of complications such as skin breakdown and contractures
- Stimulates circulation
- Provides opportunity for range of motion exercises

What you can do:

- **Follow basic principles in positioning of patients**
 - Help maintain good body alignment
 - Prior to re-positioning, verbally reassure the patient to promote comfort and cooperation
 - Properly handle the patient's body to prevent pain or injury
 - For the person in bed:
 - Place a pillow under the head and shoulders to prevent strain on neck muscles and hyperextension and flexion of the neck
 - Support the small of the back with a folded bath towel or small pillow
 - Put a footboard at the foot of the bed and place the feet flat against it (at right angles to the legs) to prevent plantar flexion ("foot drop")
 - Arrange a sandbag along the outer portion of each foot to keep the foot upright
 - Make use of trochanter rolls, arranging it along the needed hip and thigh to keep the hip joint from rotating outward
 - Place a pillow under each forearm so the arm is at least six inches from the body
 - For the person in a wheelchair or sitting for extended periods:
 - Individualized wheelchair evaluations are essential
 - Regular weight shifting is important
 - Consider pressure mapping devices
 - Use of pillows/sandbags/trochanter rolls for proper alignment are useful in upright postures
- **Share what you learn** about this person's preferences with the care team. As you reposition him/her, what positions are most comfortable? Does any particular movement cause pain?
- **Care plan preferences** for position-related comfort

References: Body Mechanics (2007) Brookside Associates, LTD. Accessed online March 10, 2014 at

http://www.brooksidepress.org/Products/Nursing_Fundamentals_1/lesson_4_Section_2.html