

Rehab TIP SHEET #1

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Wheelchair Positioning

Example of Bad Wheelchair Positioning →

Good Wheelchair Positioning is Important Because it:

1. allows for more comfort and less fatigue and greater ability to interact with the environment;
2. promotes good posture which decreases pain especially in the neck, shoulders and back;
3. allows a person to better perform activities of daily living such as eating and brushing hair;
4. distributes a person's weight to decrease the risk of skin breakdown/pressure ulcers, caused by bad posture and lack of movement;
5. decreases the risk of the patient falling out of the chair and being injured; and
6. improves a person's ability to see more of the surroundings, breathe and swallow better and have better digestion.



← Examples of Good Wheelchair Positioning

Note that the back is straight and hips are positioned all of the way back in the wheelchair. →



Steps to Safely Position a Patient in a Wheelchair

1. Lock the wheel locks of the wheelchair.
2. Stand in front of the patient and lean him/her forward and be sure to bend your knees and flatten your back like you are going to sit in a chair.
3. Place one hand under the patient's thigh and lift the leg while leaning the patient to the opposite side.
4. Push the buttock back into the chair and repeat the process for the other side until the patient is touching the back of the chair with his/her bottom.



Reminders

- Make sure the patient is sitting in the middle of the chair with space at both hips so neither thigh is touching the side of the chair.
- Make sure the patient is sitting up straight and resting on the back of the chair.
- The thighs should be parallel to the floor when the feet are on the footrests. Adjusting the level of the footrest will raise or lower the patient's knee level.
- If the patient needs arm support, the elbows should be slightly supported by the armrests with the hands resting in the patient's lap.
- When using a lap tray, the arms should be placed on the tray with the hands towards the center. If forearm support has been recommended, the forearm and hand should lie in the center of the cushion with the wrist straight and the hand lying palm down with the fingers lying flat against the cushion.