

Rehab TIP SHEET #9

©2008 University of Alabama at Birmingham Department of Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation
619 19th Street South – SRC 529, Birmingham, AL 35249-7330
Phone 205-934-3283 Fax: 205-975-4691 Email: sciweb@uab.edu

Bed Positioning for the Immobile Patients

Good bed positioning is important because it:

1. allows for more comfort and greatly reduces chance of skin breakdown/pressure ulcers;
2. promotes good posture which decreases pain especially in the neck, shoulders, and back;
3. reduces swelling, especially in the hands and feet;
4. improves circulation of air underneath the arms and legs, preventing moisture build-up; and
5. decreases risk of contracture.



Lying On Back:



1. Place a comfortable pillow under the patient's head; position the head facing straight up or slightly turned.
2. Support the arms and hands with pillows. The palm of each hand should rest down on the pillow.
3. Place a small towel roll under the thighs, just above the knee, causing the knee to slightly bend. This reduces lower back strain as well.

Side-Lying Option #1

1. Bring out the arm that is closest to the side you are rolling to so that the patient is not lying on top of the arm. Place one small flat pillow under the patient's hand.
2. Roll the patient onto his/her side.
3. Use a pillow to support the top arm with the elbow bent and hand resting on the pillow.
4. A towel roll may be placed under the patient's top hand.
5. Bend the top hip and knee, using a pillow between the knees, also supporting the ankle on the pillow.



Side-Lying Option #2

1. Place 1 large pillow or 2 small pillows under the patient's head.
2. The bottom shoulder should be brought out to the side prior to rolling.
3. Roll the patient onto his/her side.
4. Slightly bend the bottom leg at the hip and knee, placing a pillow between the legs.
5. A pillow or foam wedge may be placed behind the back to prevent the patient from rolling backwards.

