



Postural care: Night Time Positioning

For children with movement difficulties, 24-hour Postural Care plans are vital to prevent body shape distortion. Whilst children are often well supported throughout the day using specialist seating, support at night is sometimes forgotten. As a result, a child's sleep can be disrupted, as they are unable to reposition themselves and get comfortable. This can lead to changes in body shape, causing muscle tightness and making it harder for children to sit comfortably. Long term, large changes in body shape could put pressure on internal organs and breathing, causing further discomfort and health risks. Getting dressed and tending to personal care can also become tricky as a result. This is why postural support is so important 24 hours a day.

Specialist Sleep Systems can be introduced at night time to help provide this 24-hour support and keep your child as comfortable and well supported as possible. Sleep Systems allow children to maintain a symmetrical posture, which helps to prevent changes at the pelvis, trunk and spine, whilst gently stretching the muscles. Physiotherapists and occupational therapists can advise on the variety of different Sleep Systems available and suggest the most appropriate options for your child.

Children and young people with movement difficulties can struggle with regulating their temperature and can become very hot at night. Using pillows to provide positioning support can be useful, however they often add a lot of heat to the individual when lying surrounded by them. Sleep Systems provide temperature regulating supports which wick moisture away from the body, allowing air to circulate around the individual, keeping them dry and comfortable throughout the night.

Any child or young person with movement difficulties, who is unable to reposition themselves, should be provided with night time positioning support. If you are unsure whether your child would benefit from having a Sleep System, try speaking to their physiotherapist and occupational therapist to get further advice.

Things to consider when implementing a night time positioning system are:

- **Temperature** – does your child struggle regulating their body temperature? Are they overheating at night? Do the chosen supports provide temperature regulation?
- **Seizure Activity** – does your child have frequent seizures that occur throughout the night? Does the chosen sleep system allow them to move as needed? Are they safe in their new position?
- **Night Feeds** – is your child on a feed during the night? If so, does the night time positioning system interfere with their feeds?
- **Continence** – is continence an issue? Are the supports able to be washed?
- **Pressure Points** – have any additional pressure points been created due to the change in posture?
- **Breathing** – is your child able to breathe in their new lying position? Are there any risks of aspiration?

Further Resources:

[Simple Stuff Works – Passionate about Posture](#)

[PMLD - Postural care | Mencap](#)

https://www.nes.scot.nhs.uk/media/dzwncusg/postural_care_learning_byte.pdf



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