

Repositioning Techniques

• Comfort • Pressure Relief • Support •

Supine Position

Regularly changing a patient's lying position is one of the best ways to prevent pressure ulcers. One option is to position the patient on their back in the supine position.



The Supine Position: Use pillows to support the knees and off load both heels. Use a flat pillow to keep head in a neutral position.



If knees are unable to straighten, place an additional pillow under the knees to support the joints.

30 Degree Side Tilt

Another option is the 30 degree side tilt. This positioning technique tilts the body 30 degrees sideways onto fleshy areas, with the use of pillows. The slight tilt enhances patient comfort whilst offloading vulnerable bony areas such as the sacrum, coccyx and heel bones. It is important to check that the shoulders, back and hips are well supported, aligned and not twisted.



Using the proper manual handling techniques turn the patient on to their side. Place a pillow between the patient's lower legs to stabilise the upper most leg and hip during the turn.



Tuck a pillow along the length of the patient's lumbar spine. Roll the corner of the pillow nearest the patient's coccyx/sacrum under itself so that these bony prominences are free from pressure. *Use your hand to check for clearance. Ensure there are no creases on the pillowcase as this could create a pressure point.



Place the pillow that was between the lower legs onto the bed and place the patient's uppermost leg onto it. Mould the pillow around the leg to offload the heel and provide support.



Place the edge of one corner of a third pillow under the ankle of the lower leg to raise the heel off the bed. Ensure that both heels are not in contact with the mattress.



The full 30 degree side tilt position: If necessary, place an additional pillow at the side of the pelvis to prevent the lower leg rolling out. *Slide your hand under the patient's lower most shoulder to ensure it is not retracted.



Variant position: If knees are unable to straighten, place an additional pillow under the knees to support the joints.

Where available use the controls on the profiling bed to elevate the head of the bed 20 degrees rather than using extra pillows. Patient tolerance will be dependent on their individual medical needs and personal preference.

To facilitate a simple position change from the 30 degree side tilt, remove the pillow from the lower back to allow the patient to adopt the supine position.

The 30 degree side tilt is not suitable for all patients, for example patients with unstable spinal injuries. Check suitability with medical team for patients following a new Cerebral Vascular Accident (CVA).

Agree the frequency of repositioning with the patient and always consider the patient's pressure ulcer risk, medical condition and skin tolerance to pressure.