

Your posture matters

Practitioner's guide during the **Covid-19** crisis



Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| Introduction | 02 |
| Helping someone's breathing when they are lying | 03 |
| Helping someone's breathing when they are sitting? | 04 |
| Helping someone breathe when they are standing, walking or moving | 05 |
| Why do I need to help someone look after their posture? | 06 |
| What can I do to help someone look after their posture? | 07 |
| Resource list | 08 |

Introduction

People with movement difficulties and muscle weakness, particularly if they have difficulty in changing their own position, are at risk of their posture and body shape changing. This can affect their breathing.

If someone you are supporting has a movement difficulty and difficulties with their breathing as a result of COVID-19, the following information may be of help.

Their posture throughout the day and night will impact on the shape of their body.



Helping someone's breathing when they are lying

The person may be lying more than usual. If they can, lie with their head and chest elevated. If this makes them lean over to one side, prop a pillow or two under their underarm to help them lie straighter. This will help maximise their breathing.



If you have access to an oxygen saturation monitor, **check** which positions allow for the greatest **oxygen flow**.

The person might have a **tightness** in the back of their legs making it difficult for them to lie flat. To stop their legs falling over to one side, you can **place a pillow** or two under their knees.



If they lie on their side, you can place a **pillow between their knees**. This will support them and stop them from being tight and stiff. This may **reduce pain and discomfort** having a positive impact on breathing.

If the person has a hospital bed, use the functions to **raise their head, chest and support their knees**.

Wee tip: if using equipment it may make them feel warmer than usual. Check on their temperature regularly.



Helping someone's breathing when they are **sitting**

If the person has a wheelchair and/or comfortable seat, these will be the best options to give the right postural support.



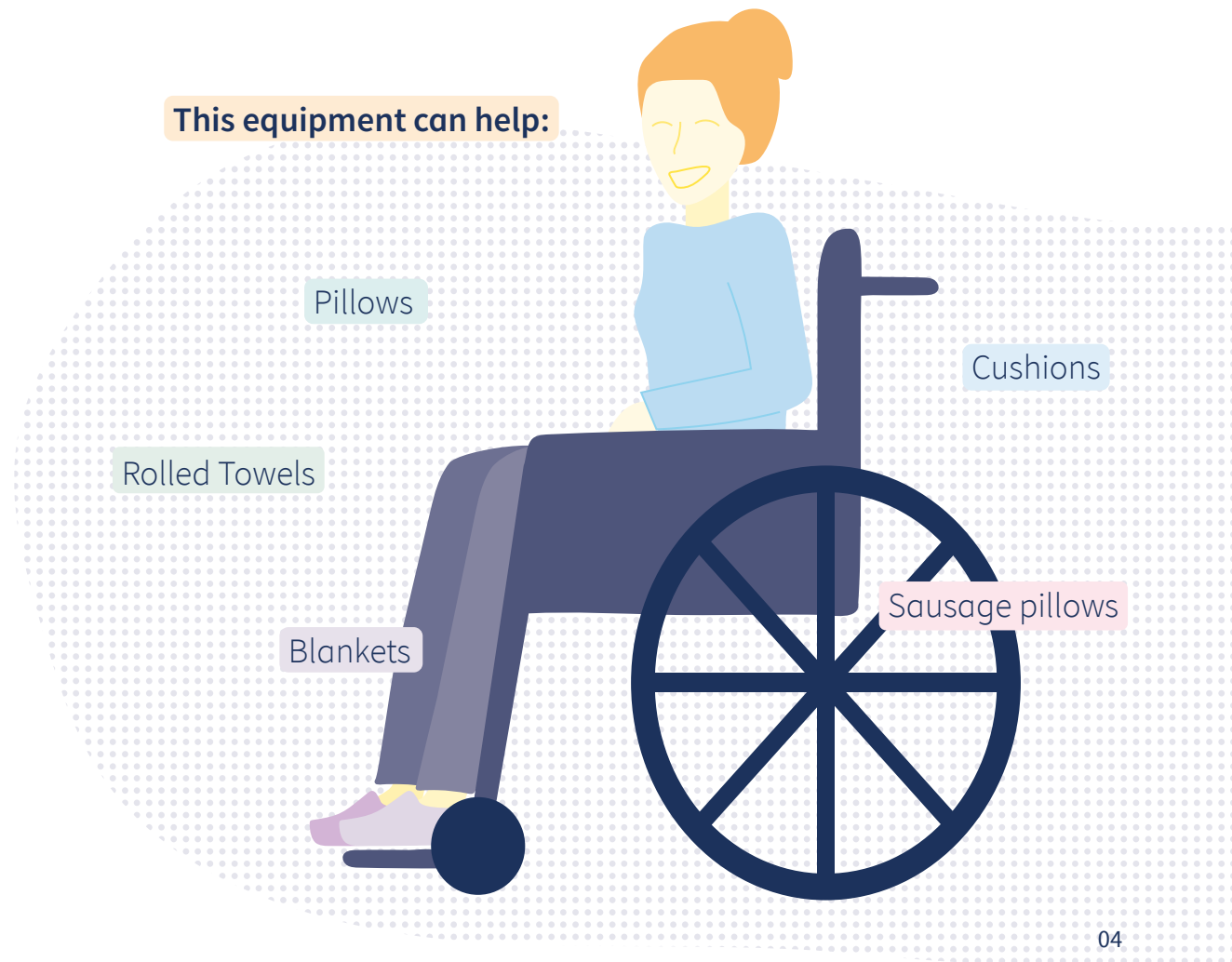
If the person is using an ordinary chair, it's important to **sit as upright as they can**. Their hips should be right at the back of the chair helping them sit up tall.



If they are slumping forward or leaning to one side, put cushions or pillows under their underarm to help them sit taller. This will help **maximise their breathing**.

Wee tip: even small changes in position can make a big difference.

This equipment can help:



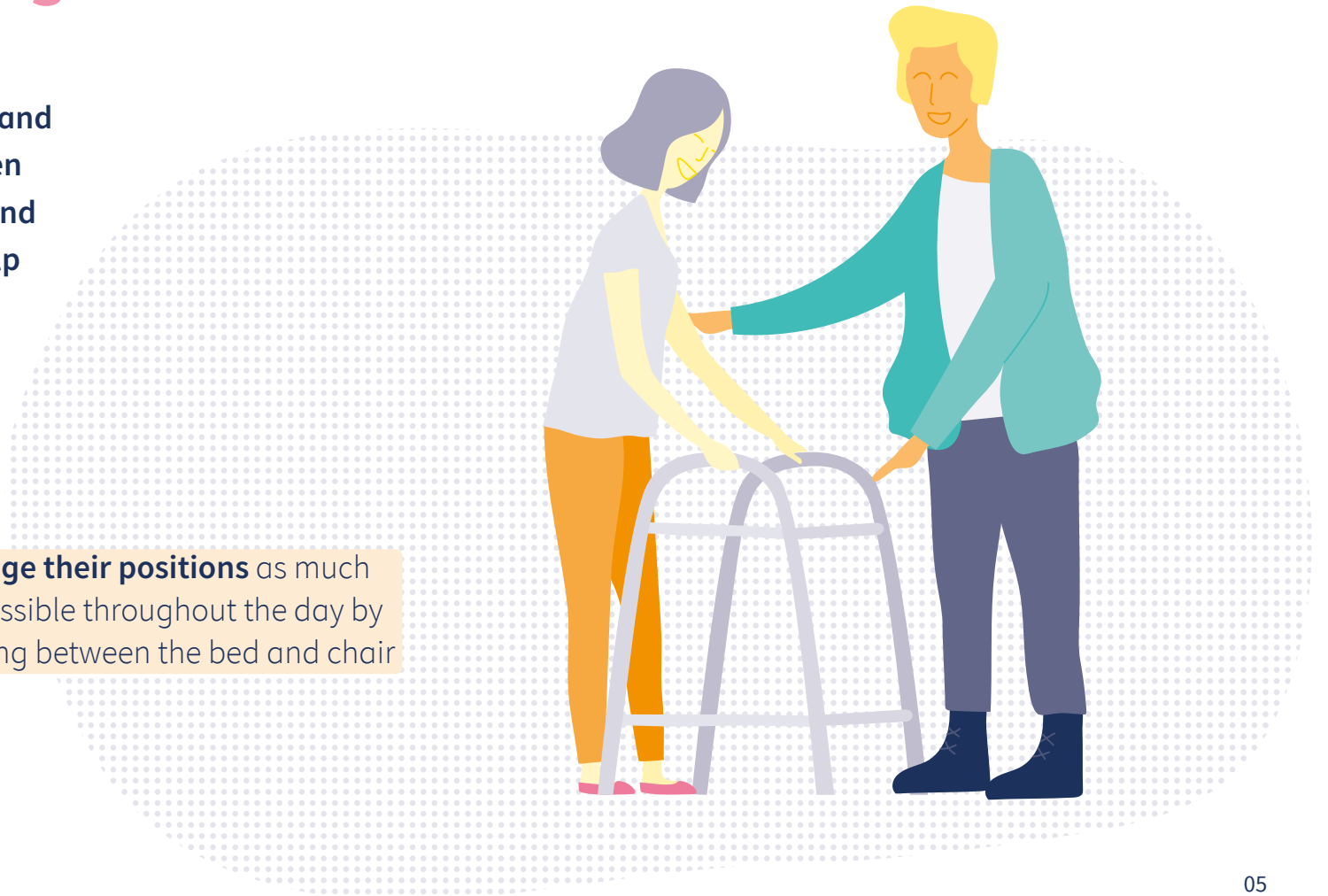


Helping someone's breathing when they are **standing, walking or moving**

If the person can, help them get up and move around during the day as often as they are able. Help them stand and walk as tall as possible, this will help maximise their breathing.

Wee tip: laughing and singing are not only good for the soul but are also good for breathing well!

Change their positions as much as possible throughout the day by moving between the bed and chair



Why do I need to help someone look after their posture **when they are social distancing?**

Reducing social contact and staying at home more might mean they are sitting and lying more. People with movement difficulties and muscle weakness, particularly if they have difficulty in changing their own position, are at risk of their posture and body shape changing. This can mean:



Becoming **stiff and sore**, making it difficult to move their limbs



Experiencing **muscle spasms and pain** in their joints



Having **difficulty with eating and drinking** with a higher risk of choking



Difficulty in communicating with others, especially if their head becomes slumped



Sluggish **digestive system**



Skin breakdown and **pressure sores**

Wee tip: are there any positions you think they need to change?



What can I do to help someone look after their posture?

Remember: it's never too late to make a difference!



Walking or moving

- + Help them get up and move around as often as they can
- + Weight bearing activities are good for their bone strength and mobility

Standing

- + Help them stand as long as they can
- + Use equipment to help them stand
- + Make sure they wear well fitting shoes and splints

Sitting

- + Make sure they have a well fitting and supportive chair/wheelchair
- + Support their head, back, thighs and feet

Lying

- + How they lie overnight affects their posture during the day
- + Avoid positions that get them stuck, stiff or sore

Change their position throughout the day

Help them stay as active as they can, as often as they can



Small changes can have a huge impact on wellbeing

Aim for their body to look symmetrical whether they're lying, sitting or moving

Resource list

The following information on Postural Care might help you or the person you are supporting.

This information is relevant to all people who have movement difficulties and muscle weakness which can lead to changes in their posture and shape of their body.

Kids Scotland website:

👉 <https://www.nhsggc.org.uk/kids/healthcare-professionals/paediatric-physiotherapy/postural-care>

NHS Inform:

👉 <https://www.nhsinform.scot/healthy-living/mental-wellbeing/stress/breathing-and-relaxation-exercises-for-stress#bsl-breathing-and-relaxation-playlist>

👉 <https://www.nhsinform.scot/healthy-living/keeping-active/getting-started/types-of-exercise>

👉 <https://www.nhsinform.scot/healthy-living/keeping-active/getting-started/wheelchair-users-and-disabled-people>

PAMIS website:

👉 <http://pamis.org.uk/services/postural-care>

PAMIS Postural Care film, YouTube:

👉 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_YC8U9YR92k

Mencap website:

👉 <https://www.mencap.org.uk/advice-and-support/profound-and-multiple-learning-disabilities-pmld/pmld-postural-care>

Changing Our Lives:

👉 <https://www.changingourlives.org/our-work-postural-care>

Public Health England resources:

👉 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/postural-care-services-making-reasonable-adjustments>

Resource list

Journal articles:

- 👉 <http://www.pmlmlink.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/PMLD-Link-Issue-85.pdf>
- 👉 <http://www.pmlmlink.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/PMLD-Link-Issue-70.pdf>
- 👉 <http://www.pmlmlink.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/PMLD-Link-Issue-83.pdf>

Educational content

NHS Education for Scotland Learning Byte:

- 👉 <https://www.nes.scot.nhs.uk/media/3560277/NES%20learning%20byte%20postural%20care.pdf>

National Managed Clinical Network for Children with Exceptional Health Care Needs

- 👉 <https://www.cen.scot.nhs.uk/learning>

Information from equipment providers

Simple Stuff Works YouTube channel:

- 👉 <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCJKeD00uyRGKQFqcXEOClSA>

Symmetrikit equipment information, YouTube channel:

- 👉 https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCv5JrWwiOAFUpD0_wVdE6LQ

This resource may be made available, in full or summary form, in alternative formats and community languages. Please contact us on **0131 656 3200** or email **altformats@nes.scot.nhs.uk** to discuss how we can best meet your requirements.



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