



Seating Ideas

Nursing Home Residents



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Introduction

This booklet shares ideas on how to provide exceptional seating for elderly residents in an effort to reduce and/or avoid the application of restraints.

The content of this booklet is not meant to be prescriptive; rather, it is meant as a general resource for nursing home staff to use clinical reasoning skills to determine optimal seating solutions for individual residents. It also assumes prior measurements were taken to properly fit residents to wheelchairs.

The Role of Therapy

It is important to include your therapy staff in seating assessment and trials. Therapy may be able to address underlying posture issues due to weakness and/or tightness.



Not All Seating Is Equal

There are typically three elderly seating postures that prompt the use of restraints:

- 🔄 Sacral Sitting
- 🔄 Forward Leaning
- 🔄 Lateral Leaning

Along with these seating postures, there are frequent self-transfer residents who are often restrained.

This booklet presents alternatives for these postures and resident types as well as other equipment that may be assistive in improving residents' quality of life.



Sacral Sitting

Sacral-seating residents prefer a posture where their sacrum is the primary weight bearer on the seat.

This posture causes their lower extremities to move forward, making them at risk for falls by sliding out of the wheelchair. It is also common for these residents to have spinal kyphosis.

If attempts to stretch and strengthen muscles have not been effective, equipment adjustments may keep this patient seated sacral with proper support.



Sacral Sitting



Posterior Pelvic Tilt

Equipment Ideas

Wheelchairs

Order a standard wheelchair with a long seat measuring 20” deep and the width required for the resident’s build. This will allow the resident unused space in the seat and still provide the correct support under the lower extremities.



Standard Wheelchair

Equipment Ideas

Tilt

After you ensure the 20” deep seat, create a slight tilt to the wheelchair by adjusting the floor-to-seat height wheel attachments.

Place the back wheels on the highest adjustment (this will lower the seat). Place the front casters on the middle or lowest attachment (this will raise the front of the wheelchair).

If the resident can propel with their feet, ensure they can reach the floor appropriately.



Equipment Ideas

Cushion

To provide a cushion for a 20” deep wheelchair seat, you will need to think outside the box.

Order a zero elevation cushion that is 20” wide and 16” or 18” deep, depending on how wide your wheelchair is for the resident.

You will then turn it sideways to place it in the wheelchair as 16” or 18” wide and 20” deep.



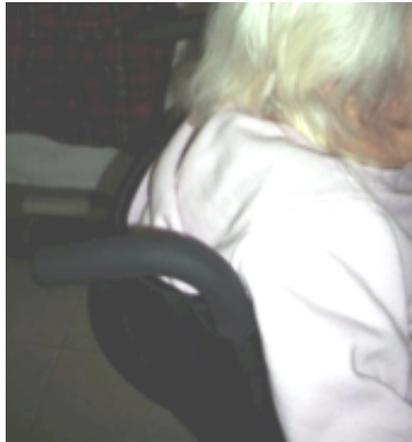
20” Deep Cushion

Equipment Ideas

Kyphosis

If the resident has kyphosis, curving of the spine that causes bowing or rounding of the back, provide a special back to the wheelchair to accommodate for that postural syndrome. There are many seat backs that provide comfort and support for kyphosis, such as a flexible seat back with a pocket, a moldable seat back and seat backs with adjustment straps.

Examples of Kyphosis Seat Backs



Equipment Ideas

Leg Rests

You will need to determine if your resident needs leg rests or if they will be propelling with their lower extremities.

In the end, you should notice that the resident has improved support and comfort with this seating equipment.



Leg Rests

Forward Leaning

A forward-leaning resident will tend to pick things up from the floor, pull socks and shoes off, or fall asleep in the forward-leaning position. This causes falls out of the wheelchair and often results in a restraint application.

Special equipment can assist in positioning the resident and keeping their attention on their lap or higher.

Examples of Forward Leaning



Equipment Ideas

Wheelchair

A forward-leaning resident can benefit from the gravity assistance provided by a tilt-in-space style chair. This tilt uses the pull of gravity to support the resident in an upright position.

There are many companies making tilt-in-space wheelchairs and some may offer a trial period to ensure the resident can be properly fitted.



Tilt-in-Space Wheel Chairs



Rock'N Go®

Use Rock'N Go® wheelchairs for residents who would benefit from the rocking motion and tilt-in-space.

Equipment Ideas

Cushion

Choose a cushion for the wheelchair to address any seating and pressure point issues. There are many styles and materials from which to choose.

Anti-thrust cushions will prevent forward thrust of the patient's bottom. This can be used in any chair except the 20" deep seat for the sacral sitter because they are not available in that length. There are also sacral cut-out cushions to prevent pressure on the coccyx.



Anti-Thrust Cushion



Sacral Cut-Out Cushion

Equipment Ideas

Other

It is a good idea to provide forward-leaning residents with something to do in their lap.

This may include holding a rice baby, using an activity apron or weighted blanket, or holding a purse or contractor's tool belt.



Activity Aprons



Rice Baby



Weighted Blanket

Lateral Leaning

Residents who lateral lean may be found sleeping against the wall or table. They may have pressure sores from excess weight bearing on arms and hips, and may be placed in restraints to hold them in an upright position.

These residents need the assistance of gravity and equipment to enhance posture and decrease pressure points.

Examples of Lateral Leaning



Equipment Ideas

Tilt-in-Space Wheelchair

Lateral-leaning residents can benefit from a tilt-in-space wheelchair. Adding lateral supports on a wheelchair will enhance positioning and provide support. Attempt to negotiate a trial period prior to purchasing a specialized wheelchair to ensure it is the right choice for a resident.

Lateral Support



Lateral Support



Equipment Ideas

High-back Wheelchair

High-back wheelchairs can also be helpful with lateral lean-ing. You can still lower the back and raise the front on most high-back wheelchairs.

When a high-back wheelchair is tilted, it relocates the center of gravity of the chair and increases the likelihood of tipping backwards. It is imperative that anti-tippers are always placed on this chair if tilted. (*see pg. 21*)



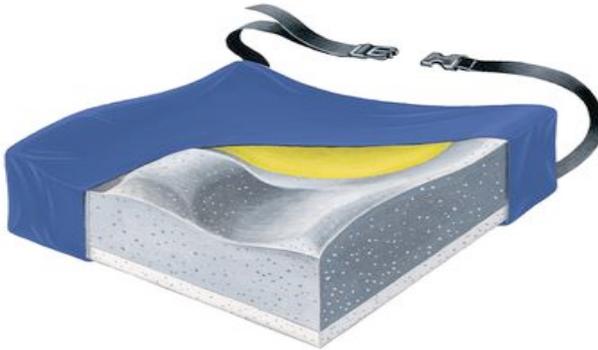
High-Back Wheelchair

Equipment Ideas

Cushion

Choose a cushion to address the needs of your resident if pelvic obliqueness is an issue.

Anti-thrust cushions work well with the lateral leaning patient as well.



Anti-Thrust Cushions

Frequent Self-Transfer

Frequent self-transfer residents are at fall risk and may also have seating needs due to sacral sitting, lateral leaning and forward leaning. Usually these residents have poor safety awareness and impaired cognition and may be placed in restraints.

These recommendations are more aggressive approaches, so consider the approaches listed in the prior pages before trying these.



Self-Transferring Resident

Equipment Ideas

Wheelchair

Start by addressing the seating needs of the resident. Provide a wheelchair that fits the resident's dimensions.

Typically, providing a hemi-height or super-hemi-height wheelchair with the fixed tilt is the first step to take.

This will create a seat much like an adirondack chair.



Equipment Ideas

Cushion

You need to make the transfer more difficult for the resident but still allow the resident to complete the transfer. Choose equipment that will slow down a resident's effort, allowing time for staff to attend and/or assist.

A safety saddle cushion has an elevation in the front of 4½ inches. Along with a fixed tilt on the wheelchair, it will create a slower transfer by the resident.



Safety Saddle

Other Equipment Ideas

Calf Supports

Calf supports help with residents who do not use their lower extremities to propel and who also have difficulty keeping their legs on wheelchair leg rests.

Calf Supports



Brakes and Locks



Bright Brakes

Bright brakes help residents identify where the brake lever is, and provide an easier surface to hold when using.



Anti-Rollback Lock

Anti-rollbacks lock the wheelchair when the resident stands up. This helps with all residents that forget to lock their brakes, causing the wheelchair to roll away from them during the transfer.



Anti-Tipper

Anti-tippers prevent the wheelchair from tipping backward. They are also available for the front of wheelchairs.

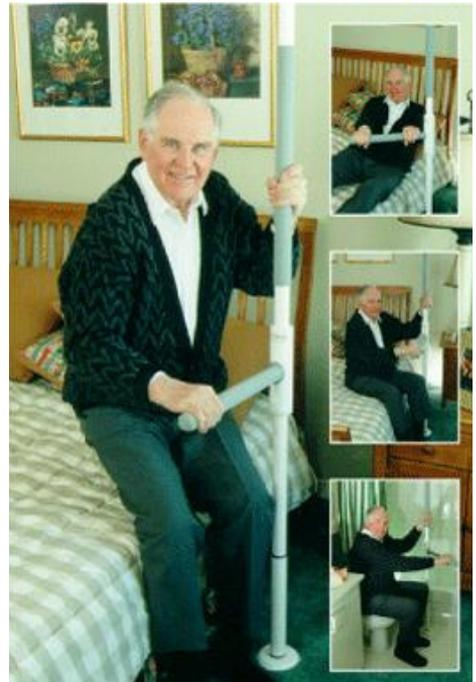
Recliners and Poles

Recliners placed in the resident's room or a supervised activity room (sunshine room) will provide another seating posture and structure for the patient to sit in and relax.



Recliner

Transfer poles increase the resident's ability to assist or complete transfers with or without staff.



Transfer Poles

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