

Your posture matters

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



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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 you have a movement difficulty and difficulties with your breathing as a result of COVID-19, the following information may be of help.

Your posture throughout the day and night will impact on the shape of your body.



How can I help my breathing when lying?

You may be lying more than usual. If you can, lie with your head and chest elevated. If you lean over to one side, prop a pillow or two under your underarm to help you lie straighter. This will help maximise your breathing.



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

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



If you lie on your side, place a **pillow between your 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 you have a hospital bed, use the functions to **raise your head, chest and support your knees**.

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



How can I help my breathing when sitting?

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



If you're using an ordinary chair, it's important to **sit as upright as you can**. Have your hips right at the back of the chair helping you sit up tall.

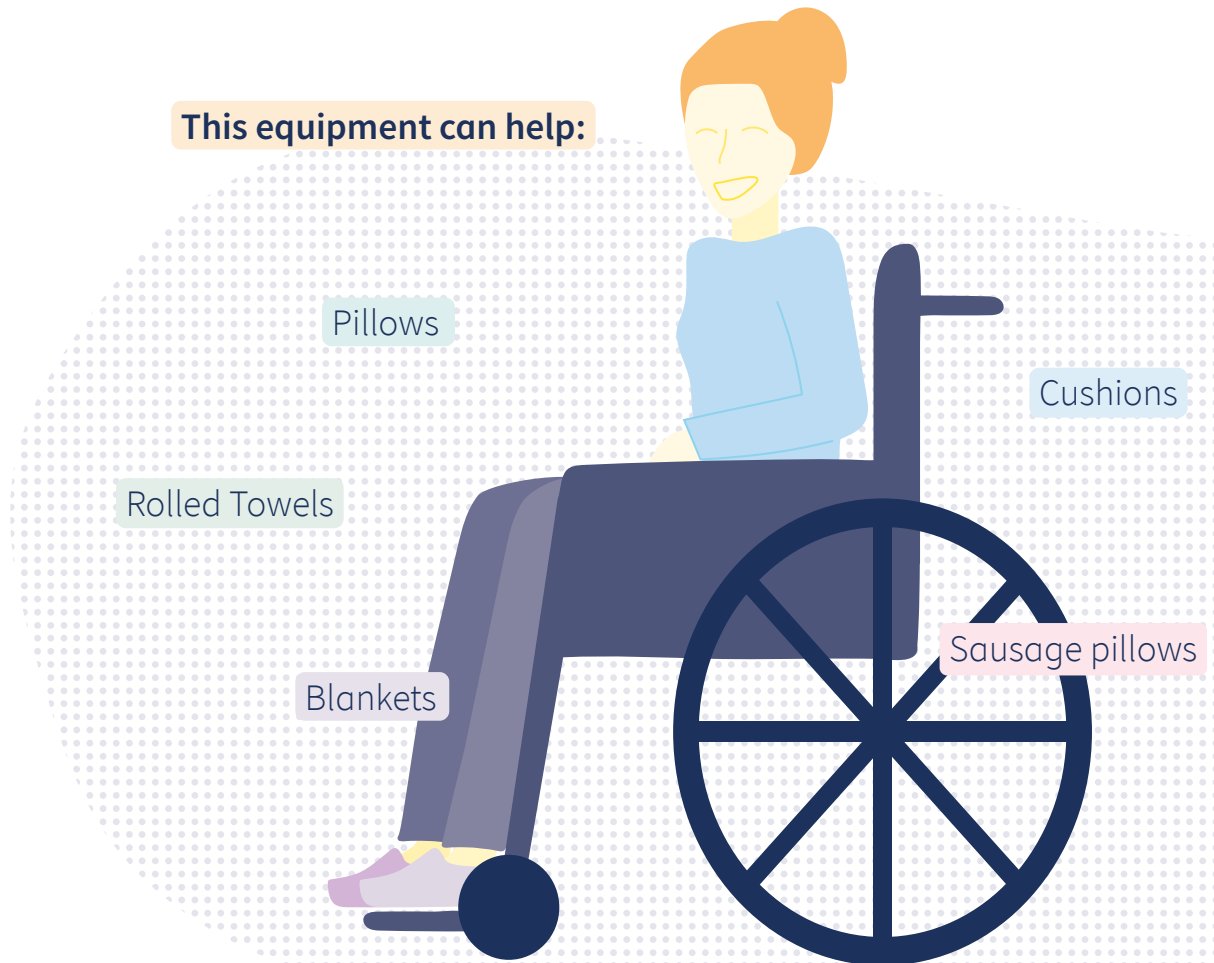


If you are slumping forward or leaning to one side, put cushions or pillows under your underarm to help sit taller. This will help **maximise your breathing**.

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



This equipment can help:





How can I help my breathing when standing, walking or moving?

If you can, get up and move around during the day as often as you are able. Stand and walk as tall as possible, this will help maximise your breathing.

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

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



Why do I need to look after my posture when social distancing?

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



Reducing social contact and staying at home more might mean you 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 your limbs



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



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



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



Sluggish **digestive system**



Skin breakdown and **pressure sores**



What can I do to look after my posture?

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



Walking or moving

- + Get up and move around as often as you can
- + Weight bearing activities are good for bone strength and mobility

Sitting

- + Well fitting and supportive chair/wheelchair
- + Support your head, back, thighs and feet

Standing

- + Stand as long as you can
- + Use equipment to help you stand
- + Wear well fitting shoes and splints

Lying

- + How you lie overnight affects your posture during the day
- + Avoid positions that get you stuck, stiff or sore

Change position throughout the day

Stay as active as you can as often as you can

Small changes can have a huge impact on wellbeing

Aim for your body to look symmetrical whether you'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#>

👉 <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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