

Non-Pharmacological Pain and Symptom Management

POSITIONING

POSITIONING – assisting the older adult to stay in comfortable positions. They may or may not be able to independently move or reposition themselves. Use assistive turning devices as appropriate and or per organization's policies and procedures.

- Helps with pain management.
- Decreases risk of complications such as pressure injuries.
- Helps maintain range of motion (e.g., gently bend and straighten arms and legs) while helping the older adult turn. Do not force joints or muscles beyond a place of comfort). Use the older adults reactions as a guide.

Active Range of Motion - This occurs when the individual is moving their body by using their own muscles and is not assisted by others. For example, having the older adult lift their arms above their head to stretch occurs to their own active range of motion.

Passive Range of Motion - This occurs when someone else (e.g., clinician, or therapist) is creating the movement. The individual is not the one engaging the muscles to start the movement and do the work.

Guidelines for positioning and stretching:

- Use pillows for support.
 - Make sure the head is comfortable on the pillow (e.g., the ear is flat on a pillow and not turned under) when the older adult is turned on their side.
 - Pillows, a full body pillow or positioning wedge can assist in positioning.
 - Reposition at least every two hours or more often if the older adult is uncomfortable.

NOTE: The clinician should only administer non-pharmacological therapies that are within their particular scope of practice. Follow the policies and procedures of your organization regarding administration of non-pharmacological therapies.

Revised April 2023

References:

Mulkey, D., (2023). Pressure Injuries in Gerontological Nursing Competencies for Care. Ed. Mauk, K.5th Ed. ISBN:9781284233360

Positioning Techniques in Long-Term Care - Registered Nurses Association of Ontario (2007)-

https://rnao.ca/sites/rnao-ca/files/Positioning_Techniques_in_Long-Term_Care_-_Self-directed_learning_package_for_health_care_providers.pdf