



Seating matters

Seating and older people

Many older people:

- have increased difficulty getting on and off a chair due to decreased strength in their leg muscles
- get uncomfortable in a chair more quickly as there is not as much tissue over the base of their hips
- may have a condition that affects their posture, for example arthritis, stroke
- could have weaker muscles which makes maintaining sitting balance more difficult leading to increased fatigue
- have mobility problems which may result in larger amounts of time sitting.

When do I need to consider seating?

If an older person:

- spends a large part of their day in a seated position
- is unable to adjust their position in the chair on their own
- has postural problems
- expresses increased pain or discomfort when seated or you are concerned about their skin care
- is having increasing difficulty with social interaction, feeding, or general everyday activities

Consequences of inappropriate seating

- Improper posture can lead to pressure sores.
- Difficulties transferring/unsafe transfers.
- Physical problems, for example contractures, muscle atrophy, increased risk of bladder infection, pneumonia, constipation, pain, discomfort, respiratory problems, circulation difficulties.
- Decreased participation in everyday activities, for example reading, feeding, personal care.
- Decreased social interaction can lead to increased depression/anxiety.
- Increased agitation.
- Increased fatigue due to muscles working harder to maintain balance.
- Increased dependency.
- Increased falls.



What might be wrong with a chair?

If an older person:

- has their knees higher than their hips when seated then the chair is likely to be too low - consider using a higher chair
- is unable to put their feet flat on the floor then the chair is probably too high or too deep - consider a lower or narrower chair
- is sliding forward in the chair to allow them to put their feet on the floor then there is a risk they may slide off it or their back won't be supported by the back rest. Similarly, this indicates that the chair is too high or deep so again consider a lower or narrower chair
- has restricted arm movements then the chair may be too narrow or arms of the chair may be too high so consider a wider chair or one with lower arms
- is unable to rest their arms on the arm-rests or are leaning heavily to one side the chair may be too wide so consider a narrower chair
- is having difficulty getting off the chair it may be too low, too soft, too reclined or the arms may be too far apart. Consider a higher, firmer, more upright chair or one that is narrower.

meas



What is the ideal seated position for an older person?

- Weight should be spread evenly between their back, buttocks, thighs, feet, and forearms.
- Thighs should be supported.
- Pelvis should not be tilted.
- The trunk should be supported, not rotated.
- Feet should be flat on the floor.
- The back should be fully supported by the backrest.
- Arms should be fully supported by the armrests.
- Hands should be free to interact.

Be careful if:

- using extendable footrests or footstools as they can be easy to trip over and do not always support a person's ankles
- using a removable cushion as this can affect the height of the chair and position of the armrests.

uring for seating

A simple way to ensure the correct seating is to measure the person and their seat. Firstly ensure that the person is sitting comfortably and is as upright.

For seat height: Measure from the floor at their heel to the fold at the back of their knee. This gives you the minimum height required.

For seat depth: Measure from the fold at the back of their knee to the back of their bottom.

For seat width: Measure across the widest part of their bottom.

When do I need to consider a specialist seating assessment?

If you have tried the solutions in this leaflet and are still concerned about an older person:

- being uncomfortable
- being in pain
- sliding off a chair
- skin or posture
- being restricted during participation in everyday activities due to their seating.

You may need a specialist seating assessment. If you require any further advice, please contact your community occupational therapist.

There are companies that are qualified to do specialist seating assessment and they can be easily found through the internet or your local telephone directory.

Developed by Lynsey Cameron
Care Home Liaison Occupational Therapist
NHS Lanarkshire in partnership with Up and About in Care Homes



Headquarters

Care Inspectorate
Compass House
11 Riverside Drive
Dundee
DD1 4NY
Tel: 01382 207100
Fax: 01382 207289

Website: www.careinspectorate.com

Email: enquiries@careinspectorate.com

Care Inspectorate Enquiries: 0845 600 9527

This publication is available in other formats and other languages on request.

Tha am foillseachadh seo ri fhaighinn ann an cruthannan is cànan eile ma nithear iarrtas.

অনুরোধসাপেক্ষে এই প্রকাশনাটি অন্য ফরম্যাট এবং অন্যান্য ভাষায় পাওয়া যায়।

یہ اشاعت درخواست کرنے پر دیگر شکلوں اور دیگر زبانوں میں فراہم کی جاسکتی ہے۔

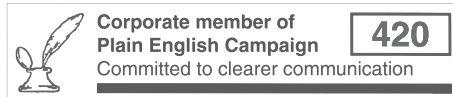
ਬੇਨਤੀ 'ਤੇ ਇਹ ਪ੍ਰਕਾਸ਼ਨ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਹੋਰਨਾਂ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਉਪਲਬਧ ਹੈ।

هذه الوثيقة متوفرة بلغات ونماذج أخرى عند الطلب

本出版品有其他格式和其他語言備索。

Na życzenie niniejsza publikacja dostępna jest także w innych formatach oraz językach.

© Care Inspectorate 2015
Published by: Communications
Printed on recycled paper.
Please recycle me again!



COMMS-0415-172