



## Pillow Management Program

A guide to improve patient comfort  
and pillow utilization.

the **pillow** factory<sup>®</sup>

A Division of Encompass Group



There is nothing more important to the patient and their experience than the items that touch their body. Patients need just the right combination of the comforts of home and healthcare support.

On average, we spend 1/3 of our life sleeping, in addition to personal care needs on a day to day basis when undergoing recovery or acute care assistance. Having a high quality, comfortable pillow that assists with an individual's needs is important in supporting optimal rest. This guide seeks to provide information to support acute care facilities in their efforts to select, manage, and utilize pillows.

#### **DID YOU KNOW?...**

Standard mattresses and pillows can become contaminated with body substances during use or care if the integrity of the covers become compromised. Pillows and their covers should be easily cleanable.†

#### **PILLOW SELECTION**

Identify the right pillow for the patient

#### **PILLOW MANAGEMENT**

Principles of effective pillow management

#### **USE & CARE**

Proper cleaning, inspection, and infection prevention

† Guidelines for Environmental Infection Control in Health-Care Facilities, Recommendations of CDC and the Healthcare Infection Control Practices Advisory Committee (HICPAC) U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Atlanta, GA 30333, 2003.

## Pillow Selection

In the acute care environment, facilities are being stretched financially and functionally on a daily basis. Pillow management is an area that deserves consideration. Each facility can benefit from policies for selection, usage, cost containment, and patient satisfaction.

Pillow selection and usage policies should be determined by each facility's Clinical, Infection Prevention, and EVS Teams. Varying patient needs and care approaches are often complex. This program seeks to offer selection assistance which outlines important influencing factors.

Healthcare pillows are described based on three primary features which determine quality and value.

- 1. Pillow tickings / covers are made from woven or nonwoven materials with varying levels of breathability, as well as fluid and stain resistance.**
- 2. Pillows are sized in four basic dimensions. 13" x 17", 17" x 23", 19" x 25", 21" x 27". Size selection will be based on the product's use in the care of the patient, as well as coordination with pillowcase size.**
- 3. Loft levels are determined by the fiber type and quality. They are often described as standard, medium, or full.**

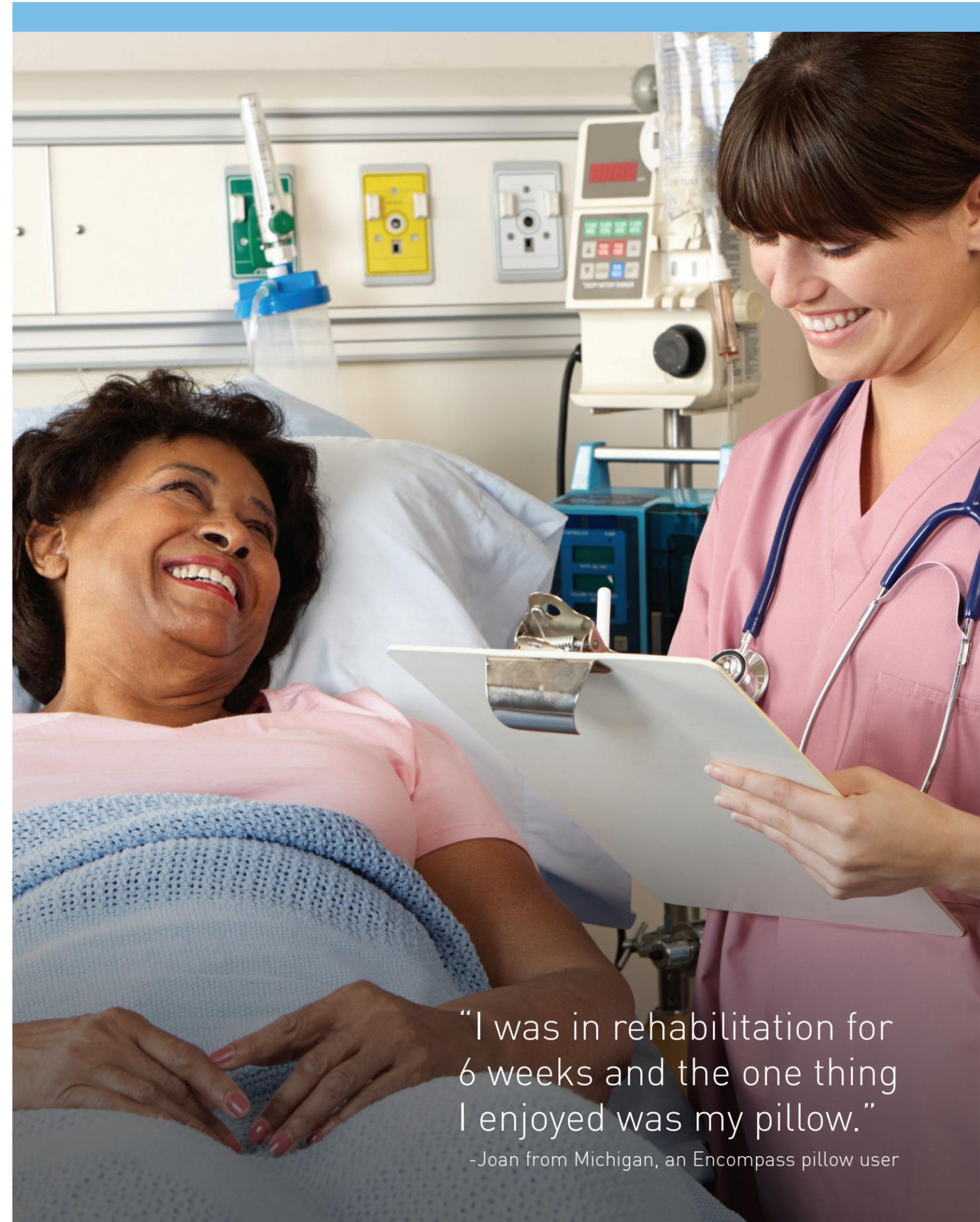
In coordination with the product features above, pillow selection is also determined based on other factors considered in the patient's care plan.

### Factors that influence pillow selection may include:

- Potential for fluid exposure
- Risk for infectious disease
- Understanding patient care needs and personal preferences
- Testing and procedural area requirements as indicated

Personal pillows are breathable and used by one patient on a limited basis. This option is ideal where there is potential for fluid exposure or infectious disease risk. Reusable pillows are available in a variety of fluid resistant and fluid proof covers, allowing them to be used for longer periods of time and potentially by multiple patients. It might also be appropriate to use a limited-use pillow that would support ease in positioning; especially when exposed to conditions that increase the need for frequent discard. The chart below identifies the spectrum of features that Encompass's Pillow Factory brands address.

RevolutionaryCARE® Easy Care® Comfort Care™	CareGuard® Plus Pro-Barrier®	Fresh Start™ Personal Pillows (single patient/limited-use)
Comfort & Performance	Fluid & Stain Resistant	Breathability & Freshness



“I was in rehabilitation for 6 weeks and the one thing I enjoyed was my pillow.”

-Joan from Michigan, an Encompass pillow user



## Pillow Management

Proper pillow management can help ensure ideal comfort and a safe living environment for patients. Patients need rest and comfort while the facility needs to effectively manage costs. Typically, a facility should have 3.5 pillows per bed in service to provide ideal care and comfort. Frequently, pillows are not found in sufficient numbers at the point of use. Many pillows end up in the laundry or stuffed in closets where they sit idle.

The best possible outcome for patient satisfaction and pillow utilization is accomplished with a routine pillow inventory process. In support of any inventory effort, there should also be an established process to manage and track inventory in service. Reusable pillows should be date-tagged when entered into circulation with the anticipated expiration date to support ease in identifying pillows at the end of their useful life. Pillow replacement should be approximately 25-50% of the overall inventory every two years.

### The inventory process should attempt to identify:

- the type of pillows in use
- patient satisfaction with pillows
- general understanding of how the patient population utilizes pillows (i.e. pillow verses positioning aid)
- pillow life
- effectiveness of current policies regarding pillow inspection and cleaning

Providers in today's healthcare environments are challenged daily to support infection prevention protocols. While human to human contact is the leading cause of the spread of germs, even with emphasizing the importance of hand hygiene, germs also continue to survive on hard and soft surfaces throughout the patient/patient environment. Despite the existing evidence of soft surface contamination, the majority of attention is focused on touch points and hard surfaces in healthcare settings. If soft surfaces, are left unaddressed, the presence of contamination can increase the risk of cross contamination; undermining any hard surface disinfection protocols in process.

In addition, those pillows with coverings that are fluid resistant or serve as a fluid barrier, combined with anti-microbial properties, may provide additional support in reducing the risk of cross-contamination.





## Pillow Care & Maintenance

In support of any infection prevention practice, pillows and their covers should be routinely cleaned, either in a hot water laundry cycle or through the use of a product that is EPA-registered to kill bacteria on those surfaces that can't be laundered.

**When developing a pillow care policy, considerations may include the following:**

- **A cleaning & inspection process should occur on a frequent and routine basis.**
- **Damaged or heavily soiled pillows should be removed immediately.**
- **Proper cleaning of good condition pillows will support the reduced risk for the spread of infection.**

Below is a list of the common disinfectants used in a healthcare environment for soft surface cleaning.

1. Phenolics: Benzyl-4-chlorophenol, Amylphenol, Phenylphenol
2. Halogens: Hypochlorites, Bleach
3. Alcohols: Ethyl Alcohol (ethanol), Isopropyl Alcohol (isopropanol)
4. Aldehydes: Glutaraldehyde Quaternary Amines: Ammonium Chloride (benzyl and ethylbenzyl)

Active ingredients should be validated with pillow manufacturers before use.

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Better care starts with safety and comfort.